CENTRAL STORE 2

ENGLISH WOODLANDS AND THEIR STORY

HOUGHTON TOWNLEY

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LIBRARY
NOTTINGHAM
Class Mark DA 188 .T6
Book Number 62074
UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
WITHDRAWN
FROM THE LIBRARY

PRESENTED TO THE
LIBRARY OF
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
NOTTINGHAM
by
Professor J. W. Carr.
1937.
UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
WITHDRAWN
FROM THE LIBRARY

60 0283369 9
WITHDRAWN
FROM THE LIBRARY

.dents and External Readers	Staff & Research Students
DATE DUE FOR RETURN	**DATE OF ISSUE**

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
27 APR 2012
WITHDRAWN
FROM THE LIBRARY

N.B. All books must be returned for the Annual Inspection in June

Any book which you borrow remains your responsibility until the loan slip is cancelled

ENGLISH WOODLANDS AND THEIR STORY

A Forest Avenue.

ENGLISH WOODLANDS AND THEIR STORY

BY

HOUGHTON TOWNLEY

AUTHOR OF
"THE BISHOP'S EMERALDS" "THE SPLENDID COWARD"
"THE SECRET OF THE RAFT" ETC.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
WITHDRAWN
FROM THE LIBRARY

ILLUSTRATED BY 100 CAMERA PICTURES
TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published in 1910

"If I could put my woods in song
And tell what's there enjoyed;
All men would to my gardens throng
And leave the cities void."

EMERSON

TO

MY WIFE

THE SHARER OF MANY PATIENT HOURS IN
THE STUDY AND IN THE WOODLAND STUDIOS

CONTENTS

PAGE

Introduction 1

I. BURNHAM BEECHES

CHAP.

I. A Forest in Little — The Haunt of some Immortals — The Wood inspires a Masterpiece 17

II. Two Lovers seek the Forest 33

III. The Mystery of the Lopping 47

IV. Burnham Abbey—"The short and simple annals of the poor". 56

V. The Artists—Trees in Art 70

II. SHERWOOD FOREST

VI. When Lions roamed in Sherwood 86

VII. Robin Hood 105

III. THE NEW FOREST

VIII. A real Forest of the Crown 124

IX. The White Monks of Beaulieu 139

X. The Execution of Rufus 155

IV. EPPING, AND THE FOREST OF ESSEX

XI. A Forest of the People 172

XII. From Epping to the North Pole—The Epping Hunt . . . 190

XIII. Shooting Stags in Essex—Turpin and the wild Brakes . . 203

V. THE FOREST OF DEAN

CHAP. PAGE
XIV. A Forest of Oak and Iron 215
XV. Where the Romans Mined 235

VI. WINDSOR FOREST

XVI. The Wood of the Queens 246

VII. SAVERNAKE, AND SOME OTHER FORESTS

XVII. The Finest Avenue in England—The Forest of Anderida . 275

VIII. WOODLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

XVIII. In the Woods with a Camera 295

INDEX 307

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A Forest Avenue . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

In the Glades of Sherwood—Birkland 1
Old Age. Burnham Beeches 4
Sherwood 8
Burnham Beeches 12
Burnham Beeches 17
Burnham Beeches—"His Majesty," the finest Beech in the Woodland 20
Burnham Beeches—Autumn 24
Burnham Beeches 28
Burnham Beeches 32
Burnham Beeches—Old Cottages at Egypt 36
Burnham Beeches—Among the Silver Birches near the Ponds . 40
Mendelssohn's Slope, Victoria Drive, Burnham Beeches . . 44
On the Green at Egypt, Burnham Beeches 48
Hardicanute's Moat, Burnham Beeches 52
Autumn in the Woods 56
Daughter of the Woods 60
Burnham Beeches—Duke's Drive at the Egypt End . . . 64
Burnham Beeches 68
Burnham Beeches—The Middle Pond 72
A Woodland Pool 76
Burnham Beeches 80
Burnham Beeches 84
Creswell Crags, Sherwood Forest 86
Sherwood Forest—One of "Robin Hood's Caves" . . . 88
Sherwood Forest 92
An Old Oak 96
Sherwood Forest—The Major Oak and its Keeper . . . 100
Hoar Frost in the Woods 102
British Oaks, Sherwood 105

FACING PAGE

"The Stag at Eve" 108
Tall Trees, Sherwood 112
Where Robin Hood roamed 116
Sherwood Oaks 120
A Typical New Forest Road 124
Autumn—Gathering Bracken 128
New Forest Ponies 132
New Forest—Among the Giants of Knightwood . . . 136
Beaulieu Abbey 140
The Old Walls of Beaulieu Abbey 142
New Forest—Near Balmer Lawn 144
Near Mark Ash, New Forest 148
Fine Timber 152
New Forest—On the Lyndhurst Road 160
New Forest 164
A New Forest Stream 168
Epping Forest—Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, Chingford, showing the Stairs up which she is reputed to have ridden—now a Museum 172
Near Ambesbury Banks, Epping Forest 176
Epping Forest 180
Old Oak, Epping 184
Epping Forest—Near Fairmead 188
A Cluster of Beeches, Epping 192
A Pool, Epping Forest 196
Epping Forest—The Trench at Ambesbury Banks where Boadicea is supposed to have pitched her last Camp 202
Willows, Epping 206
Monks Wood, Epping 210
Forest of Dean—The Castle of St. Briavels 214
Forest of Dean—On the Top of the Roman Scowles, generally known as the Devil's Chapel 218
Miners' Shanties—Forest of Dean 222
The Newland Oak, Forest of Dean, commonly reputed the Second Largest in Britain 226
Forest of Dean—An abandoned Mine 230
Forest of Dean—In the Scowles collecting the Iron Ore . . 234
Pine Trees 238
Windsor Forest—Queen Victoria's favourite Oak . . . 246
In the Wood of the Queens, Windsor Forest 250

FACING PAGE

Near the Long Walk, Windsor 254
Virginia Water, Windsor Forest 258
The Conqueror Oak—The Largest Tree in Windsor Forest . . 262
Near High Standing Hill, Windsor 266
The Falls, Virginia Water 270
Savernake Forest 274
Savernake—The Grand Avenue 276
Savernake—The Grand Avenue 280
Savernake—The Grand Avenue 282
Savernake—A Peep from the Grand Avenue through the Trees across the Park 284
The High Trees, Ashdown 286
Ashdown Forest—From the "High Trees" 288
High Beeches—Ashdown Forest 290
Ashdown Forest 292
Gollywog Trees, Burnham Beeches (Five Plates) . . . 294
On the Slopes of Ashdown 296
The Woodman's Wife 298
Burnham Beeches 302
A Giant Claw, Windsor 304
A Pantomime Tree, Windsor 306

The illustrations forming the frontispiece and facing pages 4, 44, 52, 68, and 84 are reproduced by kind permission of Messrs. LAWRENCE & JELLICOE, of 34 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, the publishers of the larger photogravures.

IN THE GLADES OF SHERWOOD—BIRKLAND

ENGLISH WOODLANDS AND THEIR STORY

INTRODUCTION

THE term Forests, as used in the pages of this book, is intended to convey the modern idea—an extensive tract of dense, wild, wooded country, where the trees have attained maturity, grandeur, and numbers, and exist more or less in their primeval state. But the etymology of the word Forest has no connection with woods or woodland; it means a waste or large open space. The legal definition of a forest which prevailed from pre-Norman days until the days of Charles II is, according to Manwood's *Laws of the Forest*, first published in 1598:—

"A certain territorie of wooddy grounds and fruitfull pasture, priviledged for wild beastts and foules of Forest Chase and Warren to rest and abide in, in the safe protection of the King, for his princely delight and pleasure, which territorie of ground, so priviledged, is meered and bounded with irremoueable markes, meres, and boundaries, wether knowen by matter of record or else by prescription."

A recent writer, expressing this more tersely, and in current diction, describes a forest as—

"A portion of territory consisting of extensive waste lands, and including a certain amount of both woodland and pasture, circumscribed by definite metes and bounds, within which the right of hunting was reserved exclusively to the King, and which was subject to a special code of laws administered by local as well as central ministers."

Before the Norman Conquest all the wooded tracts of this fair land not apportioned to the nobles of the victorious Saxon Angles and Danes were regarded as belonging to the King; and until the time of Canute the nobles and the neighbouring farmers shared with the King in the benefits of hunting, pasturage of cattle, and the taking of wood. William the Conqueror claimed all the wild animals, wherever they might be; but Edward the Confessor had allowed his subjects the killing of game, provided it was done on their own property.

When William the Norman vanquished Harold at Hastings, and seized our tight little island, he found sixty-eight forests, of which twelve had special officers to administer the peculiar laws belonging to them; and being devotedly attached to the chase, added to and amplified the existing enactments, and imported into the regulations French notions of the sacred character of royal property distinctly obnoxious to the independent Saxon. In short, practically all the wooded lands of the country not in the actual possession of definite owners were ranked as King's land and Crown property, from which the sovereign drew

revenues. He was at liberty to dispose of them by gift, and to appoint Wardens and Keepers for the enforcement of his laws, and for the trial and punishment of offenders.

The Norman Kings held that they could, by their own decree, make a forest wherever they pleased, and cause any particular tract to be "afforested"—that is, all the boundaries to be removed, the land kept open, and the forest laws to be considered as binding on the inhabitants, although their pastures were devoured by the wild beasts of the King without recompense. No man was allowed to enclose his own property; the royal deer could browse at will in these areas; and none might bend a bow without warrant of the Crown.

These high-handed methods naturally provoked the bitterest animosity and caused the spilling of much blood.

The creation of the New Forest by William was a case in point, rousing such a rebellious spirit that it was found necessary to excuse the rigorous new laws by the supposed discovery of an ancient Act of Edward's, by which the Normans pretended they were only carrying out more stringently certain edicts promulgated by their Saxon predecessors. The old Act has since been proved to be a forgery; but it is instructive and quaint in demonstrating that William did not ride rough-shod over his new subjects, or impose his will without some finesse.

Mr. Fisher, in his *Forest of Essex* (1888), is

probably right in assuming that these supposed forgeries are but later free renderings of actual laws of that date, which were themselves based on far earlier forest regulations.

William the Conqueror doubtless brought with him clear recollections of the regulations which had prevailed for some centuries in France, and engrafted them on the hunting laws prevalent among Saxon and Danish Kings. The result was the establishment of a forest code of singular severity and cruelty, which prevailed over all the great stretches of woodland and of cultivated and uncultivated lands where royal hunting rights had been maintained by the Kings he displaced, as well as over the demesne lands of Edward the Confessor and of the nobles who had opposed the Normans. Under the Conqueror's rule, therefore, the forests or reserved game districts largely increased, and even whole counties, such as Essex and Surrey, were for a time placed under the rigour of forest law. The complaints caused by this despotic action of the Conqueror and his immediate successors, gradually grew in volume; certain disafforestations were made even by Henry II, who crystallized some of the worst features of the Norman code in the Assize of Woodstock in 1184. John was compelled by one of the articles of the Magna Charta to agree to the disafforesting of all the great tracts of country, such as the Isle of Purbeck, which had been made forest during his reign, and the child King Henry III was obliged in 1217 to restore to the general laws of the kingdom the districts

OLD AGE. BURNHAM BEECHES

which had been turned into forests or royal hunting grounds since the coronation of Henry II.

Although we are far more concerned in these pages with the woodlands or forests as they exist in our own day, their histories are so interwoven with the ancient legal machinery by which they were administered, that it will be convenient and useful to many readers to set forth with due brevity a glossary or terse explanation of old forest terms. Those who desire to dip further into this subject may be referred to the old treatise of Manwood. But his accounts and definitions have to be read or accepted with much caution, for he wrote in Elizabethan days, when the old forest system was already in rapid decay, and several of his assertions and statements are now deservedly discredited. Those who wish to gain accurate information, based on the vast stores of early forest records at the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, are advised to study Mr. Turner's *Select Pleas of the Forest* (1901), or the more popular work by Dr. Cox, *The Royal Forests of England* (1905).

Agister was the name of the officer responsible for the collection of money for the agistment or feeding of cattle and pigs on defined areas and at strictly limited seasons. There were usually four to each forest. They were expected to report to the verderers as to illegal agistment, and of the escape to the forest of stray animals.

Assart was the term applied to enclosure and cultivation of land, with or without warrant, within a

forest. The penalty for each action was a fine at the next eyre, and also a further sum for crops grown on the assart, namely, a shilling for each acre of winter corn, and sixpence for spring corn.

Beasts of the Forest.—Manwood, who is usually cited, is hopelessly wrong and confused on this point, and makes fanciful divisions derived from French hunting customs which were occasionally followed by the English court. From the legal standing point of forest land, the beasts of the forest were four in number, namely, the red deer, the fallow deer, the roe deer, and the wild boar. These were all strictly preserved. As to "beasts of the chase," a term of no legal signification, it may be held to include, in addition to the deer and wild boar, the wolf, hare, fox, and other vermin such as the martin, wild cat, badger, and otter, and even in some cases the squirrel. These animals were all chased or hunted, but after very different fashions. The right to pursue these within royal forests was granted with frequency by the Crown to various individuals.

The oldest book on hunting in England is a treatise, *Le Art de Venerie*, written in Norman French about 1325, by Twicé, huntsman to Edward II. A later English version thus distinguishes between the beasts of the forest, dividing them into three groups, —for hunting, not for legal purposes. We cite (by permission) from Dr. Cox's *Royal Forests.*

The first group is that of the four beasts of venery, the hart (red deer), wolf, wild boar, and hare. These were *sylvestres*, that is, they spent their days in the

woods or coppices, and were taken by what was considered true hunting (as still followed by the Devon and Somerset Staghounds), being tracked and roused by the Lymers or Lymer hounds, and afterwards pursued by the pack.

The second group were the fallow and roe deer, the fox and the martin; these were beasts of chase or *campestres*, being found in the open country by day, and therefore required none of the niceties of tracking and harbouring in the thickets.

The third group, neither of venery nor chase, were the badger, the wild cat, and the otter.

Cablish properly signifies windfallen trees, as distinct from mere windfallen branches; but if the branches were sufficiently large to be used as timber for building purposes, they came under this category. The term was never used for such windstrewn fragments as were gathered for fuel. The disposal of cablish was usually strictly reserved either to the forest warden or to the Crown.

Chase was, strictly speaking, the name given to a hunting district which was unenclosed and only defined by metes and bounds like a forest, but being held by a subject was not under forest laws. Offences committed therein were, as a rule, punishable by the common law. The terms chase and forest were now and again used interchangeably; where this occurs, it will always be found that either a chase had been secured by the Crown, or that the Crown had granted what used to be a forest to a subject.

Cheminage was a way-leave or passage through a forest granted in return for a fixed payment or toll. The custom differed considerably in various forests, but was generally only imposed during the fence-month (see below); the charge was generally graduated between a cart-load, a horse-load, and a back burden.

Eyre.—The forest eyre was a court held by the King's justices to administer forest law and to sentence offenders. The proper interval between these eyres or pleas of the forest is supposed to have been seven years; but in practice the intervals were capricious and wholly irregular, extending not infrequently to thirty years, and occasionally even to upwards of forty. One of the consequences of this prolonged delay was that the consideration of the essoines, or excuses for non-attendance, with which the eyre always opened, mainly consisted in recording the deaths of the offenders through lapse of time. The offenders, both in vert (see below) and venison, were almost invariably out on bail. The usual punishments were fines, which were graduated according to the position of the culprit; those who were able to prove poverty were, as a rule, excused. It must always be remembered, and it is usually forgotten by the ordinary run of writers, that the old terrible code of forest law, involving much mutilation or capital punishment for venison offences, irredeemable by any forfeiture, became quite extinct early in the thirteenth century. Various forms of forest encroachments (included under the terms Assart and Purpresture) also came under the cognizance of the justices; they usually yielded a rich

SHERWOOD

"Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall oaks from little acorns grow"

crop of fines which went to the Crown. One of the several unhappy actions of Charles I. was the attempt to raise revenue by a revival of these almost extinct courts, and the imposing of monstrous fines.

Foresters were officers sworn to preserve the venison and vert in their respective walks or bailiwicks. They had power to attach or arrest offenders and trespassers, and to present them at the courts. They could arrest and imprison any one actually seen to hunt or kill deer, and also summons—to use a modern term—those carrying bows and arrows, or any form of snare, or having a dog with them in the forest. They might not hunt themselves, nor even carry a bow, save under warrant from the warden, or when training young dogs according to custom. The forester had always certain rights of pasturage and grainage, in addition to a daily wage, usually of twopence, and also one or two deer and one or two trees during the year. The symbol of an ordinary forester was that of a hunting horn, as found on incised sepulchral slabs. If the symbol of a bow is found, or a bow in conjunction with a horn, it usually denotes a higher grade of forester, or forester-of-fee, which was often in the larger forests an hereditary distinction.

Fowls of the Forest is a term that can hardly be applied to any bird with correctness save the swan. Swan-warding was a part of the duties of the foresters or underkeepers of the forests of Windsor, Clarendon, and Duffield. Pheasants, partridges, and woodcocks were held to be fowls of warren (see under Warren), and occasionally even plovers and larks. Probably the

taking of any birds by snares or falconry within a warren constituted a legal trespass.

Estover is a term properly applied to any kind of sustenance, but in connection with forests it usually means the grant or customary right of the forest tenant to wood for the fourfold purposes of firing, mending or making tools, building or repairing houses, and the construction of hedges or fences. These rights, which varied much in different forests, were known as plough-bote, house-bote, fire-bote, and hedge-bote. As a general rule the forest tenants might not help themselves to wood for any of these purposes, save picking up dry fallen sticks for firing.

Eyries of hawks and falcons were, as a rule, carefully preserved for the Crown in the forests, but were occasionally awarded to the chief keeper. The term does not mean a mere nest of wild hawks (though the taking of hawks or their nests was an offence), but an artificial place for breeding and preserving hawks for the purpose of hawking.

Fence-month (in Latin *Mensis vetitus*) signified the period within which the deer required rest and special protection. It lasted from fifteen days before mid-summer to fifteen days after, which was the usual time of fawning; it was during this season that cheminage was usually enforced with rigour.

Hounds.—The most commonly mentioned dog in forest rolls is the greyhound (*leporarius*), which hunted by sight. The brache, bercelet, and lime-hound were the usual varieties that hunted by scent. All dogs

within forest districts, save those lawfully used by foresters and others licensed to hunt, had to be "lawed" or mutilated by cutting off the three claws of the fore-feet.

Pannage was the term applied to the acorns and beech mast upon which the swine fattened within forest areas. The pannage season lasted from 14th September to 18th November. The usual pannage fee was a penny for each pig above a year old, and a halfpenny for each pig above six months old. Any one collecting and carrying off acorns or beech mast was subject to a fine.

Park or "hay" implied an enclosure fenced off by pales or a wall. There were various parks within certain forests, such as Duffield and Needwood, and but few forests were without one or two. Forest law prevailed within such parks, but not in the far more numerous private parks held under chartered grants outside forest limits. A usual device of park owners near to a forest was to construct "saltatoria" or "deerleaps," constructed in such a manner that the beasts of the forest could readily leap over them from the outside, but were unable to return. These contrivances were frequently condemned by the forest courts and their owners fined.

Perambulations of forests, so as to secure their exact boundaries, were of fairly frequent occurrence. They were made by twelve sworn knights of the county or counties affected; the knights had power to summons the foresters and verderers to their assistance.

Purlieu, strictly speaking, was all that ground near any forest which had been originally forest by per-

ambulations of the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, or John, but had been disafforested by the charter of Henry III. The purlieus of some forests were of great extent. The purlieumen held certain forest agistment and other rights, but usually for a much less extensive scale than those of the actual forest tenants. On the other hand, the purlieumen laboured under certain disadvantages, the chief of which was the non-disturbance of any deer that they might find amid their crops.

Purpresture in forest law meant any encroachment upon the soil of a forest, such as the erection of a mill, a sheepfold, or any kind of house or shed without the King's license; it also included the making of a fence or ditch.

Regard was the word applied to the triennial inspection of the woods and all other parts of a forest. The duty of the twelve or more knights, who were called Regarders, was to draw up answers to a long series of questions concerning almost every possible particular as to the condition of the forest. A regard of specially searching character was always held prior to the summonsing of a court of forest pleas before the justices.

Swainmote, sometimes known as the attachment court, was the local court of forest administration, which, if kept regularly, as ordered by the Forest Charter, met every forty-two days, and was hence also known as the Forty Day Court. The court was presided over by the verderers and steward of the chief keeper; the foresters and woodmen presented offenders in the matter of

"Therefore if you would propagate trees for timber cut not off their heads at all, nor be too busy with lopping: but if you desire shade and fuel, or bearing of mast alone, lop off their tops, sear, and unthriving branches only"

Evelyn

venison and vert. Small fines could be imposed, but, broadly speaking, the offenders were all released on bail until the next eyre was held; if, however, a man had committed a fourth forest offence, he was imprisoned until the irregular time came round for holding the eyre.

Verderers were forest officers directly responsible to the Crown, but elected by the freeholders in the county court. The appointment was for life, subject to removal by the Crown for incapacity! The office was unsalaried, and held by men of some position, who were frequently knights. They varied in number, according to the size or importance of the forest, from two to six. It was their duty to attend all swainmotes or local courts, and to enrol all manner of attachments for vert or venison trespass ready for the justices. In these petty courts the verderers were the judges in all vert cases of the value of twopence or under; this limit was afterwards raised to fourpence. Their symbol of office was an axe.

Vert signified green or growing wood, and was sometimes known as "greenhue" in the later forest proceedings. All growing wood, from the largest forest tree down to the meanest underwood, was strictly preserved, not only because of its own value, but mainly because without its shelter the deer could not live, and several of the larger forests, such as the High Peak, had but a scanty supply of any kind of timber. The clippings of the trees and bushes also supplied winter food for the deer, in addition to acorns and beech mast.

Warren denoted either the exclusive right of hunting and taking certain wild animals in a particular place (by royal grants of "free-warren"), or the land over which such right existed. No one might follow the hunt of a hare or a fox or other vermin into warrenable land, under the very severe penalty of £10, but following the hunt of deer into such land was no trespass.

Wax and Honey of wild bees were important perquisites of the Crown within royal forests. The forest courts frequently fined those who were detected taking either wax or honey.

Woodwards were primarily responsible for the timber or underwood within a particular part of a royal forest, but they had to be sworn at the local courts and served to a certain extent as foresters for the preservation of the venison. They were usually nominated and maintained by the owners of private woods, which were nevertheless subject to various forest restrictions. Their symbol was a small hatchet or billhook.

. . . . . .

The Forest Eyres became a regular part of the legal machinery of the country; and the forest officers, armed with kingly authority, exercised their powers with rigour, but with decreasing severity as the centuries rolled by. They ruled unquestioned, and cheated and tyrannized in their several spheres, according to the lawlessness or prosperity of the age in which they lived, and succumbed to corruption and cupidity after the fashion of human nature all the world over where petty authority is backed by royal favour.

Add to these conditions the occasional desperate need of monarchs in financial distress, and it can easily be understood that the royal claims upon the soil and all that grew or fattened upon it, were sometimes strained to the point of robbery. The Kings' lieges, not to be outdone by the rapacity of their royal masters, were prone to seize and enclose neglected land for their personal benefit; and as it was impossible, over such enormous areas, to supervise and tabulate every acre, a great deal of illegal seizure of land took place. By royal favour grants of certain tracts were made to individuals, especially in feudal times; in turn to be confiscated by succeeding monarchs, or transferred as rewards for loyalty and services rendered in war.

These varying circumstances conspired to make the forest areas places of unrest and instability. Yet through it all the sacred rights of the venison were preserved, and during the Norman period man took second place with the four-footed beasts. It then went hard with a commoner who dared to stalk the game. If he were a bondman, he "lost his skinne"; if a freeman, his liberty. From the days of Henry III. onwards, a much more merciful system of fines prevailed, graduated according to the position of the trespasser.

The Office of Woods and Forests now controls the ancient hunting-grounds; and the sixty-eight forests that William the Norman found in England—many of them extending over whole counties—have almost disappeared. Yet here and there wild wooded tracts remain, no longer cherished of the King, but beloved by

all of Saxon-Norman blood. Some are mere fragments of a few hundred acres, but venerated as relics of a bygone age when trees and men were more interdependent, and the wild woodland had not succumbed to the gnawing inroads of axe and ploughshare.

If undue prominence is given in this book to the woodland fragment known as Burnham Beeches—not strictly a royal forest—it is due to the author's greater personal knowledge of it and its amazing pictorial variety; also because an increasing residential population of the better sort, settling around it, at Beaconsfield, Farnham, and Burnham, know little or nothing of its history; and because it comprises within the small area of a single wood nearly everything to be seen in all the forests of England.

Access to this and the other districts described is free to all.

BURNHAM BEECHES

"Time made thee what thou wast, King of the woods,
And time hath made thee what thou art—a cave
For owls to roost in"

I. BURNHAM BEECHES

CHAPTER I

A FOREST IN LITTLE—THE HAUNT OF SOME IMMORTALS—THE WOOD INSPIRES A MASTERPIECE

HE who stands beneath the mammoth Beeches of Burnham and feels that man, the pigmy parasite of an insignificant planet, is still the grandest work of God, must either be an egoist, bankrupt of humility and insensible to the imposing majesty of trees, or a person unimpressed by the bewildering, mind-staggering idea of Time. These stately, enduring veterans have watched the passing hence of countless futile lives of men. Millions have perished since their little twin leaves peeped upward from the mossy loam. History is written all over them; romance is in the air, mystery lurks in their shadows; apathy and indifference to man and all his works is eloquent in their gnarled and twisted boles.

All that is wonderful in antiquity is here; the very trunks have taken on the shapes of prehistoric monsters—have become real dragons of the woods—and even now, in the twentieth century, after sunset, when night

enwraps the glades, stout hearts quaver beneath their ghostly out-reaching arms, and the wayfarer chooses the open path lest he trip on their giant, claw-like feet.

Gnarled and wrinkled are their skins, rude and ponderous their elephantine trunks, fangless their twisted jaws, and darkly mysterious their overloaded leafy canopies. Yet in the soft sweet sunlight they lazily wave and nod, and their topmost branches cover in the sky with a web of green and gold that glints and flickers and flames, dimly shadowing the leaf-strewn crypt beneath. When rain pours down, their split and gaping boles invite the traveller to shelter; but he shivers and stands without, made timorous by the cave-like gloom and smell of years within: and when the gale roars, the mammoths hiss and roll and creak and strain their crooked arms, raging with the blast, threatening thunder-cracks and falling boughs.

In the moonlight they whisper eerie tales; and their tall frail sisters, the silver birches, pale, beauteous, and short-lived—as such beauty always is—dance attendance like sheeted ghosts, and add their quota to the rustlings and murmurings of the gloom and murk. The monsters grumble to the wise old owls and inhospitably dislodge them, driving them from tree to tree, where they shrill hysterical retorts to the gibings and creakings of the overloaded boughs; and all through the night the leaves are moving, breathing, sighing, shuddering, living—dying.

These old trees, so different from all the other beeches in the world, must have their story. Their twisted, tangled roots, interlacing underground, have listened to the tramp of many feet o'erhead; their benediction-spreading arms have been outstretched o'er generations of woodmen, rebels, outlaws, Normans perhaps.

Clustering together in a small area of some four hundred acres of undulating Buckinghamshire soil, they have weathered the centuries long past the time when beeches die. About two hundred and fifty years is the allotted span of the *fagus*; yet here on the last sloping spur of the Chilterns, near London, is a forest of hoary centenarians that have lived on and on, scorning the ages, long after the time when other beeches have passed to their fathers. The oldest of them, including the big oaks, have seen the rising and setting suns of nearly a thousand years—so say the experts, who of course quarrel over it. It seems incredible; yet it may be true. It must be true of the Druid's Oak. The veriest townsman, when he stands in awestruck wonderment beneath their distorted boles, feels instinctively that he is looking at the growth of centuries.

No need to tell him that the oak alone sees more of history than any other tree, and point to the Druid's Oak on the Seven Ways Plain, with its enormous girth and hoary wrinkled bark. These primeval beeches, rising to the sky, with giant trees pendent on their hollow boles, have come through the stress and moil, and groaning idleness of thousands and thousands of

vanished days. Who can say when they first sprang from the wonderful green moss of the Manor of Allards? All through the simple pious years of the Middle Ages, when the hinds of the nuns of Burnham Abbey came a-gathering logs; through the wars of Cavalier and Roundhead, when the captive Charles "lay at Stoke for the night," and Cromwell's soldiers hacked their boughs for gun-stocks—as tradition tells; on still through the days of Georgian turgidity and wit, when Sheridan came a-honeymooning to Burnham, these hardy ancients have lived and thrived and grown in stature, and are growing still.

Julius Cæsar the chronicler, who came, and saw, and conquered, declared that the *fagus*, or beech tree, was not a native of Britain. But Julius evidently conquered more than he saw; for there is evidence that the beech flourished in Buckinghamshire thousands of years ago, and that, too, not three miles from Burnham. In some excavations of water-dwellings of prehistoric man on the edge of the Thames at Hedsor, adjoining Clivedon, some sturdy piles of blackened beech were brought to light not many years ago. Think of it! After thousands of years the hardy beech comes again to the upper air to bear witness to the extraordinary indestructibility of the local species.

Less wonderful, but perhaps more interesting as pointing to the enduring quality of beechwood, is the fact that Winchester Cathedral was built upon great logs and beams of beechwood, driven down into the marshy ground by the Normans in 1202, and when these great

BURNHAM BEECHES—"HIS MAJESTY," THE FINEST BEECH IN THE WOODLAND

stems and beams were dragged out recently they were as hard as when first committed to their watery grave. All the same, any wood in a condition of constant watery soak will last, especially the elm. For instance, great tubs and barrels fixed by the Romans as linings to shallow wells at Silchester, have also been drawn up in a perfectly sound condition, but they soon perish when exposed to the air, unless creosoted.

Chapters could be written on the multifarious uses of the beech tree. It is full of interest, wonder, and beauty. So colossal and yet so dainty. Such a delicate leaf, green-gold in the spring, with a glow and brilliance unequalled by any other foliage; green-gold again in the autumn, as though it would fain commence the summer over again; and later, when October's flame shoots over its shimmering leafage, it turns to orange, tawny yellow, and brown, and all the tones at the blazing end of the spectrum. During the winter the little trees often bear aloft their russet leaves, defying snow and rain, and through them the wind plays a hundred eerie, haunting melodies; songs that are muted except for the real lovers of Mother Nature.

The beech is a wonderful tree. It has played its part, and an important one, in the life of our country; a sociable tree, gregarious, and friendly to man. Ere coal found a place upon the hearths of a later civilization, and poisoned the upper air of the towns, it supplied the very best charcoal. It was also best for buckets, trenchers, shovels, and other domestic implements, before the general use of iron; and to-day it makes the

handles for the tools used to shape and carve the wood of commoner trees.

Beechwood is still of considerable account in Buckinghamshire, especially in one branch of ancient industry, the making of chairs. Again see how friendly is the beech to man. It cossets and enthrones him when his weary day is done; and where, in all the forests of Africa and Peru, can a better wood be found to make a stronger, steadier seat than the roomy, solid, stodgy, ugly Windsor chair!

This ancient forest has a kingly air, though it was never royal, or boasted wardens, verderers, or bow-bearers, yet Farnham Royal stands cheek by jowl with it; and on the opposite hill rise the towers of Windsor, clear at times, but more often dimmed by the fairy haze of purple in which Father Thames enwraps his attendant woods. The little town of Burnham, once an important Church centre, but now dwindled into the drowsy insignificance of an agricultural village, once boasted the King of the Romans for a resident when the charter of Burnham Abbey was signed; and an hour's ride from the forest, down the slope, brings the rider to Runnymede, where the real history of England began.

The woodland is wild now, and ever has been, but never forgotten by man. It boasts in one corner the remains of an entrenchment made by the spades of the Romans—so tradition declares; in another the Moat that bears the name of Hardicanute—although modern antiquarians say that it is only a mediæval homestead moat. Great men have loved the place from Sheridan

to Disraeli; but all its written history comes within the span of human affairs from 1737 to the time of its purchase by the Corporation of London in 1879. So, following the precedent of the old books, from which I propose to draw freely without apology, we must begin our history of Burnham Beeches with the year 1737, and go back farther afterwards, when we deal with the mystery of the pollarding and the story of the earlier days which is written on the bark of the trees. So let us begin with a poet in the year 1737.

So far as is discoverable, the poet Gray, the author of the immortal "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," was the first to write of Burnham Beeches in literature which has passed into the archives of the nation. He is often regarded as the discoverer; but even he, close observer of Nature that he was, does not seem to have been remarkably impressed by the unusual age of the trees, although they appealed to his moody imagination, and provided a haunt for pensive hours. He used to come to Burnham Beeches to read Virgil, and polish up his Latin, of which he had a fine conceit; and he makes the first known historical reference to the place in a letter written to Horace Walpole—nephew of Sir Robert Walpole, the politician—in September 1737, just a month before the leaves began to turn and glow in the glory of autumn. He was staying with his uncle in a house on the road between the Beeches and Burnham town, known as Cants Hall, a modest cottage which stands to this day, but is now known as Burnham Grove.

He says in his letter to Walpole :—

"I arrived safe at my uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination; his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at this present writing; and although the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet he continues still to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amongst all this is, that I have, at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the dèclivities quite so amazing as Dover Cliff; but just such hills as people, who love their necks as well as I do, may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds,

> "And as they bow their hoary tops relate,
> In murm'ring sounds, the dark decrees of Fate;
> While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Cling to each leaf and swarm on every bough.

"At the foot of one of these squats me, I (*Il penseroso*), and then grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel

BURNHAM BEECHES—AUTUMN

gambol around me like Adam in Paradise, before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil as I commonly do there. In this situation I often converse with my Horace, aloud too; that is, talk to you, but I do not remember that I have ever heard you answer me."

Gray's description has come to be regarded as classic; and never an author or journalist scribbling about the Beeches for the magazines but drags it in! And it will be found illustrated in the pictures of this volume, almost every line.

The association of the poet with the neighbourhood is a matter of local pride; and the churchyard in which he lies buried, Stoke Poges, is within half an hour's walk.

Gray really did not visit Stoke until 1742, five years after his description of the Beeches written to Horace Walpole. When his father died, Mrs. Gray wound up the family business in Cornhill and came to live with her sister, Mrs. Rogers, at Stoke Poges—where Stoke Court now stands. In those days the residence was a two-storied farmhouse. A stone fireplace with 1648 engraved upon it, in what was Gray's bedroom, and the window at which he sat, alone remain in their original condition.

It was in 1742 that he began his famous "Elegy," but it was not completed until eight years after—a poem, not, as some suppose, the inspiration of an idle hour and written on a tombstone, but the work of eight years polishing, re-polishing, and polishing again.

In the "Elegy" he speaks of himself in the well-

known verse which is claimed as having been directly inspired by a particular tree in the Beeches.

> "Here at the foot of yonder nodding Beech
> That rears its old fantastic roots so high,
> His listless length at noontide would he fling,
> And pore upon the brook that babbled by."

This, in conjunction with his letter to Horace Walpole, in which he speaks of his love for the sylvan solitude, has provoked the residents of East Burnham to mark down a particular tree as the identical one referred to in the poem. "Gray's Beech" has got into local guide-books, and an old ruin (near a ditch) used to be religiously pointed out. But, as a matter of fact, there are several beeches overhanging "the brook that babbles by," on its course through the open woodland, each of which might with equal probability have been the poet's idling place. The one most popularly known as "Gray's Beech" certainly stands beside a little stream, but the rill often dries up in summer. In another place there stood (in 1737), and now stands, a most "reverend vegetable" of gargantuan growth, that really did "nod" over the stream which in those days flowed at its feet. The roots are certainly "old and fantastic," and rear themselves to enormous height; indeed, as many as thirty-six people have lunched upon them at one time. Their circumference above ground is 50 feet, and the tree itself, which is split right down the centre of the bole, is 19 feet in girth measured 9 feet from the ground.

This tree, which for the sake of nomenclature we will call the genuine Gray's Beech, has another, and,

perhaps, a more popular association; for it is also known as Jenny Lind's tree. Under its shade the famous songstress trilled in the open woodland a challenge to the nightingales which everywhere abound. Jenny loved this sylvan haunt; but of her roamings in the forest we will speak more anon. Let us for the present return to Gray's association with this particular tree.

While staying at his uncle's in Burnham, the young man frequently visited some relatives living on the other side of Farnham Common, at West End House, Fulmer; and in passing to and fro, his way would have lain in 1737, and after, across the broad expanse of gorse-clad heath and common, by footpaths and woodman's tracks, past the sheep-washing ponds, and so on to Burnham past the fields now in the occupancy of Burnham Golf Club. So that the genuine Gray's Beech (Jenny Lind's Tree) would have been in his direct path, and about half-way. Visit it to-day and judge for yourselves whether there is any spot more tempting to the contemplative poet, more cool, romantic, and restful in summer, or more suited to the melancholy meanderings of an idle youth joining with the babblings of the stream. The brook has been diverted from the course it took in Gray's time; and instead of trickling round the foot of the tree, now runs straight through the three ponds, which lie in a chain in the hollow of the little forest. The water, later on, disappears into the ground at a spot half a mile from the present boundary of the Corporation land, and goes no one knows where.

Opinion has always been much divided upon the identity of the tree lauded in the poem; and a writer in 1882 declared that the beech alluded to is near Stoke, and "easily distinguishable," and that "the stream that babbles by" is the brook that runs from Brocklehurst Wood and joins the Thames by several mouths between Boveney and Datchet. Even the identity of the churchyard mentioned in the "Elegy" is questioned; and in Mr. F. C. Hall's book of the Upper Thames, Upton is claimed as the one and only churchyard Gray had in mind when he wrote his verses.

Be that as it may, Stoke Poges, where Gray's mother lies, and where a fine cenotaph is reared on the spot which is supposed to have inspired his "Ode on the Distant Prospect of Eton College," continues to be regarded as sacred to the memory of the poet, and a place of pilgrimage for thousands of Americans.

Gray wrote so little yet achieved so much; but not without exciting a good deal of carping criticism. Witness Lowell's description of his work:—

"He has not an idea, scarcely an epithet, which he can call his own; and yet he is, in the best sense, one of the classics of English literature. He has exquisite felicity of choice; but his dictionary has no vulgar word in it, no harsh one, but all culled from the moods of poets, and with a faint but delicious aroma of association; he has a perfect sense of sound, and one idea, without which all the poetic outfit (*si absit prudentia*) is of little avail—that of combination and arrangement, in fact of art."

Gray's contemplative nature naturally found food for

BURNHAM BEECHES

"A wood for the wind's whisperings"

Rosetti

thought in the company of his reverend vegetables, for, after all, the woodland is a world of its own. The sociology of trees is very much the same as ours. They are gregarious, quarrelsome, acquisitive, tenacious of right, careless of wrong, but all eager for the Light, and striving unceasingly upwards in a blind persistence. The survival is to the fittest, according to the will and pleasure of that same Light, which tempers law with custom, and takes cognizance of climate, soil, and overcrowding; which remembers the pests and parasites, and provides for the policing of the loam, the greed of the worm, the truculence of the wind, and the invidious hazard of the lightning.

All society is there, lords and commons, great tribes and little, pure breeds, bastards, dwarfs, throwbacks, cultured rich, and the decadent mob ever returning to the wild. Also the unloved, unwanted children strangled in the dark.

There are the patricians of the favoured lands set in close-packed plantation opulence, and nursed by sheltering slaves to clean-limbed, tall maturity. These trees are educated, medicated, spoon-fed—in a word, cultivated; a treatment upon which they thrive exceedingly, to eventually form an artificial aristocracy. But the wild is calling them unceasingly, and they return to the infinite variety and charm of the forest whenever their mentors slacken in attention.

To live with trees is to become a martyr to their moods. They can weep and smile, and sulk and fidget like restive children. They drive the artist to despair

by the changing of their moods, and alter their shape from hour to hour, intriguing with the sun to cheat him of the reward of arduous labour.

"It is not the trees that change, it is the play of the light," says Mr. Matter-of-Fact.

What knows he of the mysteries of beauty—he to whom "the primrose by the river's brim, a simple primrose is to him and nothing more." Was it not the light which Strephon saw on Chloe's cheek that filled his soul with rapture!

A tree can be bonny. A tree can be sad. She can be dowdy and smart; looking her worst and her best according to the nip of the wind and the grey of the sky —like the average woman of uncertain age. And gossip! She is worse than a kitchen wench.

Poets talk of the whisper of the wind in the trees. Mere literary licence! It is the trees that whisper. They are at it all night sometimes. If you walk among them in the dark you can hear their stealthy comments on the intrusion. They pass the word that a parasite is roaming.

"It is just the wind rustling the leaves."

That may be; but why do they do it when the air is still as death?

They get bored with standing so long in one place. After some hundreds of years it *is* monotonous. They sigh and groan and creak, and crack their joints; for at night all old people feel their age, and sometimes they cannot sleep. There is nothing to do, nothing to see, not even the birds to watch. If steady somnolence is

denied them they fret and sigh in mournful petulance, wearily awaiting the dawn.

The materialists must also allow to trees an interest in their foster-children. When a maternal beech tree opens her morning motherly eye and spies a great new red and yellow toadstool at her foot, she surely murmurs, "What, another!" and rustles all over with pride. To the water pools, so cunningly collected by her twisted roots, the timid fawn is brought to drink, and rubs his sheeny sides against her trunk in gratitude. It is a social event in a life of monotony. And when those queer shelf-like excrescences of fungus, half-wood, half-mushroom, protrude from her beautiful grey skin and suggest hang nails or warts, how irritated the tree must be.

Worst of all is the slow white leprosy of the beech coccus, that amazing parasite whose advent brings to the tree the pallor of death.

The coccus has already wrought great havoc in the beechwoods of Buckinghamshire, and unless Man the Physician is called in to advise, the blighted woods will die. Trees, like men, have their infectious diseases.

What a strange freak of nature the coccus is; without sex, arms, legs, head, or tail, it breeds by subdivision and spreads all over a mighty tree, hiding as it goes under a coat of white wax. In appearance the infected tree is frosted. That is the wax deposit. The little parasite is inside the protective covering. When sufficient numbers are assembled, they attack the bark and the cambian layers beneath, sucking the tree of its juices,

and breaking the continuity of the flow of sap. Then death begins.

It is by way of the bark and its adjuncts below that a tree draws its nourishment. Once the cambian layer is severed all the way round (if only by a penknife) the tree will die.

The coccus pest spreads from tree to tree, no one quite knows how, whether the germs are carried on the feet of birds, or by the wind, or other agencies. But it spreads insidiously and is a very real disease. The only efficacious check is by lotions and washing; and special appliances have been designed for this treatment. At the worst a tree must be singed and the ground all round it disinfected. It goes into quarantine.

There was a widespread rumour some time ago that Burnham Beeches were doomed to extinction by the appearance of the coccus. Fortunately it was not true; and it is safe to say that there are very few woodlands in Buckinghamshire so free as the Corporation's Forest at the present time—thanks to the prompt and drastic remedies by the official surgeon. The other beeches of Buckinghamshire are not so carefully tended, and if anything effectual is to be done in the county it must be by co-operative effort.

Civilization has interfered in some way with the life of the woods—probably by seducing the birds from their original hunting-grounds to the richer fare of town and field. Trees, among their other social difficulties, thus have their "back to the woods" problem, as we our "back to the land."

BURNHAM BEECHES

"What seest thou else in the dark backward and abysm of time"

The Tempest

CHAPTER II

TWO LOVERS SEEK THE FOREST

"Oh come with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
Woods or steepy mountains yield."—MARLOWE

IT seemed fated that this ancient woodland, bravely breathing the spirit of poetry and romance, should draw to it a number of eminent folk destined for immortality.

We find in 1777 one of the houses on the border of East Burnham Common (which is part of the Liberty) occupied by a young couple, who, at the respective ages of eighteen and twenty, had already made a great stir in the fashionable world. The lovers were the dramatist Sheridan, and his charming bride Miss Linley, the "Beauty of Bath."

It was a gallant age, the day of duels, minuets, sonnets, and shady chivalry. The licentious era of the Stuarts lingered still, and the surroundings of a "gentleman" were so vicious and unscrupulous as to provoke an eminent chronicler of the time to wonder whether "any single man or woman of that period lived a virtuous moral life."

Miss Linley had not escaped the universal distrust; slander's tongue beslavered her reputation and gallants were soon a-fighting for her honour.

The beautiful young singer, long since immortalized by Reynolds' and Gainsborough's pictures, flashed into the firmament of fashionable life and created a sensation. Of her surpassing loveliness there was no doubt; its exquisite sweetness, combined with rare distinction, was remarkable, even in that age of wonderful women. No wonder then that duels were fought on her behalf, and men scrambled for favours, jostling, challenging, and running each other through. Sheridan engaged in two duels in her honour, married her secretly abroad, and married her again in England, at a time when his fortunes were none of the best.

The happy couple came to East Burnham House for their honeymoon, then a modest country cottage let for the summer to fashionable people from London, but now glorified into a mansion by many additions. The road has been diverted from its gates, and tall elms have grown up round it; but the old cottage portion can easily be seen from the eastern boundary road of the Beeches, nestling behind the Stag Inn, contiguous to the little group of cottages forming the hamlet of East Burnham. Here in the shade of the old trees, and wandering on the wind-swept common, the lovers enjoyed a brief period of rest in great contrast to the stress and fret of their later life.

Strange, was it not, that this old house, to which Sheridan came haphazard, should afterwards open its

doors while still a cottage to some of the greatest notabilities of the nineteenth century? For it was here, many years later, that George Grote wrote his great *History of Greece*, and Mrs. Grote entertained a host of celebrated worthies who lie among the honoured dead and decorate the scroll of fame in letters large and small.

The Grotes had a house in town, in Savile Row, and East Burnham House, or Sheridan's Cottage, as it used to be called, was a kind of week-end residence and place for occasional retirement from Parliament and town. Mrs. Grote, who was perhaps of the two the more remarkable personality (although Grote lies in Poets' Corner), gathered to her husband's table and piloted among the trees of the forest men of light and learning, and women famous in song and story—Jenny Lind for one, Mendelssohn another; and in a long list of names we find such celebrities as John Stuart Mill, Chopin, Hume, Sydney Smith, Dessauer, Fanny Kemble, and Macaulay. The house was too small to accommodate many guests at a time, and some only came down for the day. But of those who were constant visitors, Jenny Lind was perhaps the most welcome, and Mendelssohn and John Stuart Mill the most world-renowned.

The Grotes were instrumental in bringing Jenny Lind to the notice of the British public, backing her with money, and lending her their patronage. At Burnham they persuaded her to escape the homage of the town and seek the open air. At East Burnham

House there is a window revered to this day as "Jenny Lind's window." The guest room had many other famous occupants; but the prima donna's association with it seems to be a matter of greater importance in the minds of the local peasantry, and tales are still told of her when she sang to the villagers from a balcony.

At a later date East Burnham House was sold by the Grotes, and they built for themselves a residence, a little farther away across the fields, which they dubbed History Hut, because it was purchased out of the proceeds of the famous *History of Greece*; and here they continued to entertain their friends with simple hospitality.

George Grote was member for Westminster, but abandoned parliamentary life to accomplish his monumental history, the last part of which was finished at East Burnham. It is said that Gladstone three times offered him a peerage; but he declined. He was of a quiet, retiring nature, preferring peace and seclusion and his home in the forest waste.

Not so Mrs. Grote, whom some of the older inhabitants can remember as an eccentric, strong-minded person, handsome and dashing, but domineering, impulsive, hot-tempered, and fond of vigorous outdoor life. She also was literary, and wrote a Life of her famous husband, together with a history of East Burnham (a hamlet comprising about thirty cottages) in order to ventilate a personal feud with Lady Grenville and champion the rights of her poorer neighbours; by

BURNHAM BEECHES

OLD COTTAGES AT EGYPT

which it will be understood that she was a person of no ordinary tenacity, and differed very much from her timorous contemporaries of the Early Victorian era. A description of her by Fanny Kemble, the actress, gives an illuminating glimpse of the lady's personality. The actress was on a visit to Mrs. Grote, at Burnham, accompanied by her sister Mrs. Sartoris, Mr. Chawley, and Dessauer the Viennese composer.

"The eccentricities of our hostess, with which some of us were already tolerably acquainted, were a source of unfeigned amazement and awe to Dessauer, who, himself the most curious, quaint, and withal nervously excitable and irresistible humourist, was thrown into alternative convulsions of laughter and spasms of terror at the portentous female figure, who, with a stick in her hand, a man's hat on her head, and a coachman's box-coat of drab cloth, with manifold capes, over her petticoats (English women had not yet adopted a costume undistinguishable from that of the other sex) stalked about the house and grounds, alternately superintending various matters of the domestic economy, and discussing, with equal knowledge and discrimination, questions of musical criticism and taste."

This account does not, however, accord with that given by Lady Eastlake, wife of the President of the Royal Academy, who wrote a Life of Mrs. Grote—how busy they were making history of one another in those days—and likened her to a Grande Dame of the Court of Louis XIV. She must have possessed many sides,

and a brilliant intellect to have gathered round her, as she did, the flower of Victorian literary and artistic society.

Life at the Grotes' cottage must have been delightfully informal; for the same authority describes how Mrs. Grote came into the garden one day, shouting to her guests to know "whether they would prefer bacon and peas, or bacon and beans."

Dessauer, the composer, did not understand English, but "he put his head first one side then on the other, like an intelligent terrier, trying to comprehend what was going on." He was delicate in his tastes, and preferred boiled chicken to anything else; and the invitation to a bean feast, if he had understood it, would have killed him. He was so deeply impressed with the martial stride of Mrs. Grote as she approached the party that he suddenly began with his hands and lips to imitate the rolling of a drum.

Mrs. Grote turned upon him, put her stick to the ground, and surveyed him with an awful countenance, while the poor little man in his agony rolled over and over on the lawn, crying out, "Ah, bonté divine, elle m'a compris."

The character of the mistress of East Burnham House was summed up by Sydney Smith, who once said to her as she was getting into her carriage for a long journey—

"Madam, go where you will, do what you like; I have the most unbounded confidence in your *indiscretion.*"

This rather long description of a private citizen must be excused on the plea that she introduced the forest and its beauties to so many distinguished people; besides writing a history of the hamlet. Amid all the excitement of her London salon she never lost interest in her dear East Burnham. To the very last, when she had gone to live at Shere in Surrey, she used to insist upon her old steward going down once a year to be entertained royally in exchange for all the gossip of the Beeches.

It is as the musical sponsor of Jenny Lind that Mrs. Grote can lay chief claim to the gratitude of the nation; and when the hour arrived for Jenny's first appearance in opera in London, there were many anxious hearts that had previously gathered in conclave at East Burnham.

Jenny Lind was practically mothered and chaperoned by Mrs. Grote, who at East Burnham used to send her out into the Beeches to trill in the open air and gain strength for her voice. And Jenny, who came from a land of forests, loved the place, and chose as her favourite tree the one shown in these pages under the title "The genuine Gray's Beech."

Another lady, whose name is not unassociated with palaces of gaiety and melody (but probably not destined for immortality) sang under this tree—Mrs. Ormiston Chant, on the occasion of a picnic, when thirty-six guests lunched upon its extended roots.

The grey-headed sons of the old woodmen, who remember Jenny Lind, talk familiarly of her pony

Croppy, a rotund little fellow who, in the summer mornings, carried her through the woods, hatless, joyous, and unconventional. Those were the days when carriages were scarce, when there were no roads in the Liberty, as now, only woodman's tracks churned up by the carts, and paths worn by the feet of animals grazing on the common land.

Mrs. Grote herself was a good horsewoman; but from her steward's grey-headed son I have heard many scornful things of Mr. Grote the equestrian. She insisted upon him taking horse exercise; but he was so nervous that it was only safe to put him on a very ancient beast; and he is described as "sitting a horse like a rabbit," whereas his spouse, who apparently "wore the breeches," went about, in the saddle and on foot, in top-boots and short skirts—a most *outré* costume for the prim, petticoated days of the Early Victorian era.

When she had done her ride and her tramp, the taking off of those famous top-boots was no easy task; and the same informant, her steward, old James, used to tell of his struggles with them.

"It wasn't so much the boots, or that I hadn't the strength to pull 'em off," he said, "but she *would* sit in a low arm-chair with castors on it, and when I pulled I dragged her all over the room. When at last they were off, she used to ask what I thought of her foot? She was very proud of it, for it was small; and she had it modelled because of its perfect shape." An amiable vanity.

She was of the type familiarly described to-day as

BURNHAM BEECHES—AMONG THE SILVER BIRCHES NEAR THE PONDS

"a good sort," wide in her sympathies, deadly in her enmities, and loyal to the core with those she favoured. The diplomats of musical and theatrical London naturally paid her court, and she must have had many remarkable qualities to have been admitted to the close friendship of people of such opposite temperaments as Fanny Kemble, Jenny Lind, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and John Stuart Mill.

She claimed in later years to have entirely altered Mill's point of view about the preservation of common lands, doubtless on the spot at Burnham where she had fought valiantly for the rights of her humbler neighbours. His first idea had been that all commons should be devoted to State forestry, but she convinced him of the greater economic value of open spaces as recreation grounds for the people.

Knowing Mendelssohn's retiring, sensitive, and contemplative disposition, Mrs. Grote invited the musician many times to Burnham Beeches, where he loved to wander in the secluded calm of the forest and gather inspiration from the music of the leaves. In her *Memoirs* there is a notable passage in which she describes how she came to erect a memorial to him, after his death, on a certain mossy bank in the heart of the Beeches.

The young composer, much run down from overwork, and racked with grief from the loss of a favourite sister, seeming unable to recover his spirits, the kindly lady persuaded him to abandon the fret and stress of social life, and exchange excitement, con-

sequent upon work in town, for the calm of the forest. On this occasion she accompanied him to the top of a dell, now known as Mendelssohn's Slope.

But let her tell, in her own words, how this particular glade came to be associated for all time with the composer's memory.

"Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy paid us a visit at our residence adjoining Burnham Beeches, in the summer of 1847. Some of his intimate friends were also our guests, and he appeared to enjoy his brief holiday with almost youthful relish. After wandering about one day, in the old forest-like glades, till he was well-nigh tired with walking, he laid himself down on a green mossy bank, and listened to the sighing of the breeze overhead blending itself with the many small sounds incident to woodland scenery, till he seemed absorbed in thought. After some little time passed in silence, he said, 'I think I could set all this to music.'

"In memory of this illustrious man's visit, I caused a stone to be placed on the spot, and planted flowers and shrubs around; even protecting the stone by an iron railing. In vain! the boys of the hamlet, with a horror of vacuity which seems to be common to both man and animal, amused themselves on Sundays, for want of a better pastime, with defacing the lines on the stone, and breaking off the willow and cypress twigs. I could not make headway against such enemies, and after a year or two removed my humble memorial in despair."

STANZAS ON FELIX MENDELSSOHN

WRITTEN IN BURNHAM BEECHES, JAN., 1848

BY MRS. GROTE

(Wife of George Grote, author of the *Standard History of Greece*)

THESE ancient groves and solitudes among
Lately a bright celestial Being strayed;
A brief retreat from out the admiring throng
He sought and found beneath their leafy shade.

With careless steps he ranged the forest's maze;
Then, resting here a space, his raptured eye
He bent upon the scene with thoughtful gaze,
And bathed his spirit in its poetry.

[1] To mark the cherished spot which once he pressed,
An humble mourner's hand hath raised a stone;
For He hath sunk to an eternal rest,
Untimely parted from his young renown,

[1] Ere his rich gifts and inspirations bore
Their perfect fruit in his creative mind;
Ere swelled to flood, in life's meridian hour,
The Master's art to bless and charm mankind,

[1] He stood confessed a genius—yet he scorned
An Idol's tempting privilege to claim;
The virtues of the Man his course adorned,
And added lustre to his lyric fame.

Ah! Mendelssohn hadst thou but oftener sought
Calm Nature's presence—hadst thou oftener fled
The incense-offering crowd, and idly caught
The summer breeze to fan thy fevered head—

Haply, e'en now, within its earthly sphere
Had beamed the radiance of thy soul divine;
And spared had been the unavailing tear,
Which from a thousand eyelids falls, with mine.

---

[1] These stanzas are engraved on the stone fragment of the memorial to Mendelssohn, in the possession of Mr. James of Grenville Lodge.

Only the third, fourth, and fifth stanza appeared on the memorial, which had a chequered career, from two causes: first, the unpractical mind of the lady who designed and erected it; and secondly, the dislike of rustic yokels for gravestones in any but graveyards. Its shape was conventional, the railings ugly, and it had no meaning. The only indication of its connection with Mendelssohn lay in the initials at the top, F.M.B. Even in her choice of the stanzas she was not very happy; for when read apart from the others they are not too intelligible. The verse, too, containing the composer's name was omitted, and thus the memorial became purely impersonal, and its existence a mystery to those who discovered it in the heart of the woodland.

Perhaps Mrs. Grote had enemies in East Burnham; it is more than likely; they may have vented their spleen by destroying the stone. After its mutilation it was removed to her house, where it stood for a time in a little island in the garden, surrounded by a moat and covered in climbing roses. At her death it passed out of memory; but thirty years later, Mr. Titus James, grandson of the woodman James, rescued it after it had lain neglected and forgotten, and set it up in the garden of his house, Grenville Lodge—a favourite resort of those seeking a quiet country holiday, and the local headquarters of the Cyclists' Touring Club.

In October 1908 a movement was set on foot in the neighbourhood to induce the Corporation to erect a suitable memorial on the same spot—for choice a

MENDELSSOHN'S SLOPE, VICTORIA DRIVE, BURNHAM BEECHES

comfortable seat with an appropriate inscription—but at the present time the spot is marked only by a simple wooden notice-board.

The way to reach the place is to enter Halse Drive from the Common (off Lord Mayor's Drive), and after going a hundred yards strike into a wide footpath on the left, broader than the usual paths, but not wide enough for a road. On the right-hand side of this path the spot lies, near an oak tree and a beech tree, which stand almost opposite one another on either side of the path. Birch trees and hollies have grown up since Mendelssohn's time; but the glorious romantic view down the slope is of the finest. The trees here are not very monstrous; and the view beneath them is not too much encumbered with coppice. The whole slope is carpeted with red leaves, and as the sun pierces the canopy overhead with glancing shafts the effect is magical. In the spring and in the autumn it is sensational, and provokes the rudest mind to joyous appreciation.

Mendelssohn had a knack of losing himself. The paths then were sheep-tracks, and not so recognizable as now. He used generally to find his way to this particular spot on the outward journey, but the woodman James used to be sent to fetch him home.

"You'll have to bring him home, or he'll never find his way," Mrs. Grote would say. And James used to seek him, finding him at work in an idyllic spot which later was marked by the memorial.

"What was he composing?" old James was frequently

asked by his son; but his reply was: "Some dream or other—I don't know."

It would be interesting to identify the particular composition inspired by that lovely forest glade. But unless some friend of Mendelssohn, still in the land of the living, and possessed of a good memory, can recall any conversation on the subject, it is likely to remain one of the mysteries of the Beeches.

This visit to the Grotes was in the summer of 1847, a year before the composer's early death, and it ought not to be difficult to proceed by a process of elimination. The story of "the dream" was due to a conversation between Mrs. Grote and Mendelssohn on the occasion of that last visit, when James overheard them discussing music and a dream.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERY OF THE LOPPING

THE mystery of the extraordinary condition of the trees of Burnham is a perpetual puzzle to the inhabitants and to visitors.

The Beeches were pollarded at some remote period of their history, and lopped remoselessly; and from the pollarded trunks have grown huge limbs, each as fine as a large tree. And the strange multiplicity of their branches is often accompanied by a correspondingly curious distension and distortion of their roots.

History tells us not when, or under what circumstances, they were beheaded; but many are the speculations, rumours, legends, and fabrications, with which visitors are locally regaled. One absurd tradition ascribes the act to Cromwell, "who cut off their heads and painted them red, to look like soldiers." But the appearance of the trees does not justify the assumption that the pollarding took place as late as the time of Cromwell. It is much more likely that a succession of thrifty lords of the manor centuries before ordered the wielding of the axe for the purpose of gain; and as the Manor of Allards was in the posses-

sion of the Eyre family for four hundred years (ending in 1810) the woods were doubtless lopped by them for revenue.

Another local tradition associates the mutilation with the Duchess of Monmouth, whose palace was in Burnham town at the time of her husband's execution. She is said to have ordered the beheading of the trees after the execution of her lord, as a mark of grief. But as there is no evidence that the land belonged to her, the story has no foundation.

All that remains of Monmouth's palace is in Burnham High Street, a range of buildings in plaster and cross quartering, of unpretentious appearance, now used as part of a brewery—all the rest is destroyed.

No right of cutting the timber has been allowed to the commoners of East Burnham ; the lord of the manor for the time being, as owner of the soil, alone had the right to touch the trees. The real truth about the pollarding may never be known ; but it is reasonable to assume that the woods were once frequented by charcoal burners, who lopped the trees for the purposes of their trade. Of this, however, there is no documentary evidence.

The Beeches (according to the age rings of their great branches) ceased to be systematically lopped about a hundred and fifty years ago—a few at a hundred and eighty—and their age has been calculated by experts to be between five hundred and seven hundred years.

It is rather amazing, seeing that the beech is not ordinarily a long-lived tree, its years being roughly from

ON THE GREEN AT EGYPT, BURNHAM BEECHES

one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty; but if pollarded, or beheaded, early—say at thirty or forty years—and afterwards lopped at intervals, its life may be indefinitely prolonged.

The lopping and pollarding make the bole grow hollow. This happens not only with the beech, but with all trees. They take nourishment from the earth through their bark—or through a fibrous layer under the bark—and so long as that remains unbroken at some point round the bole the required sustenance travels upward.

The wood of the beech is ideal for the purpose of the charcoal burner. And here is a curious fact; the lopping of the Beeches must have ceased just about the time that coal came into general use. Before then the fuel of Burnham, Taplow, Windsor, and outer London was wood and charcoal. Charcoal burning flourished as steadily as any other agricultural industry; and a progressive lord of the manor would have a valuable asset in a beech forest. The crop of branches required was no thicker than a man's wrist; and these were baked in rude kilns. The two cottages which for a long time stood on Burnham Golf Course used to be known as Charcoal Cottages; and the links themselves were, within the memory of one of my informants, a scrubby woodland of stunted pollarded trees, used as required by the kiln owners. The last dying flicker of the local industry remains on Littleworth Common, in the person of Joe Shepherd, a charcoal burner of to-day, whose father before him supplied Windsor Castle. Queen

Victoria always preferred charcoal, and some of the local brand was regularly sent to Balmoral. Her successors have neglected the old custom.

When coal began to supplant wood as a fuel, brought by the canals and the Thames, the beechwoods were no longer lopped. The slender stems were left to grow into great trees, each springing from the mutilated pollard, and producing the many-headed monsters of to-day.

One interesting and very important question repeatedly asked is, "What is the age of the oldest tree in the Beeches? And, roughly, what is the age of *all* the large trees?"

Experts differ to such an extent that it is impossible to reconcile their views. One noted antiquarian I have consulted writes me—

"I think that the idea of these trees being lopped continuously for centuries is quite a mistake. I believe, and have been told upon the spot by two experienced tree-students, one of them a thorough woodman, that the strong probability is that they were once most severely pollarded for the sake of timber for charcoal—perchance for the making of gunpowder during the great Civil War—and this severe treatment was never followed up by like action, and that it is this severity and solitary action which has gradually brought about the great size of the limbs, and also caused the unusual thickening and coarsening of trunks and roots, and incidentally has brought about their exceptional longevity."

The present ranger is of opinion that there is no

question that the trees were lopped periodically for centuries, as shown by the immensity of the pollard tops and other indisputable evidence.

There is an impression abroad that the tree lopping was done by residents, or commoners; but from all the evidence to be obtained this was not so. The forest belonged to the lord of the manor, and was very remunerative. The beech tree was the best in the olden days, as it is now, for fuel, and was of considerable value for a variety of purposes. In the eighteenth century the records of the Manor give instances of payment made by the villagers, proving that they had no right of estovers.

The beech forest provided two sources of revenue: first, from the sale of wood for fuel and general commercial purposes — such as the making of buckets, shovels, trenchers; and secondly, for the pannage of pigs who fed on the beech mast. Wood faggots were also regular articles of commerce.

Fuel in this country grew dearer and dearer, until the year 1750, when the greater development of canal traffic diminished the cost of freight and checked any further rise.

The mystery is, therefore, no longer why the trees of Burnham were lopped, but rather why they ceased to be lopped at a particular time, and were never afterwards interfered with. The decline of wood and charcoal as fuel was undoubtedly one reason for their preservation.

There was another. The Manor of Allards fell into

the hands of a succession of heirs who were careless of their rights and lived very long lives. The woods were neglected, the game left to poachers, and the place came to be regarded almost as public property. But of this we shall hear more when dealing with the Manor of Allards.

In one corner of the Beeches, just off the main road known as Park Lane, leading through from Farnham Royal to Littleworth Common, are the remains of an old rectangular fortification, known as Hardicanute's Moat, and locally as Harlequin's Moat. A certain amount of mystery exists locally concerning this place, and some believe that it is not a moat at all. In hot weather the trench is often dry; but in the winter it fills up, generally after a heavy fall of snow. The water remains there until the summer sun empties the trenches and reveals a wide moat of a depth of four or five feet filled with rotting leaves.

There is nothing more than local tradition to establish a connection between this lonely moat and Hardicanute.

The Chiltern Hills were certainly the refuge of Saxons and Danes driven from London and the fertile valley of the Thames by the Norman invaders; just as in the earlier times they were the retreat of the ancient Britons whom the Romans harried and scattered when they were making the Bath road.

But the extraordinary state of preservation of the Moat, whose lines are sharp and clear, with banks rounded and unbroken, leads one to suspect that perhaps, after all, it does not date back very far. There are

HARDICANUTE'S MOAT, BURNHAM BEECHES

some boundaries of private land near by, marked as by earthworks, which have rather the appearance of a second and outer fortification; but the antiquarians of the new Victoria County Histories have put it in their map as one of the mediæval homestead moats. A strange place for a homestead say the local farmers, and pin their faith to the old tradition.

Inquiries of an old man of eighty, a lifelong resident, concerning this question of the Moat, elicited the statement that he remembered his father talking of the discovery of some stones, which pointed to the existence of an old well; which would rather substantiate the theory of the mediæval homestead. The land round for miles was waste and woodland in the Middle Ages and earlier, so that the enclosure could hardly have been more than a herding-place for swine.

A writer, Mrs. Boyle of Huntercombe, in her book *Seven Gardens and a Palace*, gives a vivid description of a visit to Burnham Beeches, and mentions a heap of flint stones and traces of a workshop for flint instruments in one corner of the Moat enclosure, pointing to an even earlier age than Hardicanute.

Mrs. Boyle's description of the Moat is well worth quoting:—

"Hardicanute's camp is a ghostly place to wander in alone! It is surrounded by a deep moat fifteen feet wide, whose waters are black as ink, crossed at one angle by a narrow little isthmus. Should you visit the camp even in the merry month of May, a kind of depressing influence will make you unwilling to linger

long. The day may be bright and breezy, every roadside budding plant putting forth its strength in freshest green, and happy little hedge birds in the fields and lanes hopping and flying hither and thither. On the way to the camp everything in Nature may seem instinct with life and gladness, till the Moat is crossed into the shades of the ancient camp, where chill and solemn calm prevails. There is certainly something uncanny in the intense stillness! Could an antiquarian search be made by digging, the question sometimes asked, whether the camp has been Roman or Danish, might be settled. In one corner a quantity of flint chips seem to point to a workship having existed there for the fashioning of flint implements. A fine javelin, or spear head, was found there, and doubtless underneath the rough moss and rank grass-tufts more such treasures may lie concealed. Wood has grown up on both sides of the Moat, and trees stretch across it their lichened interlacing boughs."

A reference to the nightingales and glow-worms of the neighbourhood is also interesting. She says: "From the heart of the Beeches the 'sportive squirrel and timorous hare' have disappeared since Gray's time. Sometimes may be heard the gurgle of a nightingale, the subdued twitter of finches, or the voice of stock-dove in meditative mood. But as a rule wild birds and beasts are seldom heard or seen there. It is said, however, that, towards the end of their season in England, nightingales flock to Burnham Beeches from all parts of the kingdom to hold a last grand midnight concert. It

is certain that glow-worms—as it is only meet they should—attend the concert. For often the country people, returning home that way on late summer nights, pick them up and carry off the living lamps on their hat-brims."

CHAPTER IV

BURNHAM ABBEY—"THE SHORT AND SIMPLE ANNALS OF THE POOR"

NOT very far from the Thames, and about a mile from Burnham town, is a very large farm, clustering around the remains of a fine old abbey. Horses and cows look out at you from the Gothic doors and windows, and the roughest sheds disfigure the ruins. This is all that remains of the old convent of Austin nuns, founded in 1266 by Richard, Duke of Cornwall, King of the Romans, "the richest prince in Christendom."

Adjoining stands Huntercombe, "an old house full of echoes," and one of the most delightful residences in England. This was the home of the original owners of Burnham Beeches. Tall yew hedges hide it from the road, and it lies tucked away some quarter of a mile from the Bath road, in the midst of fertile green meadows. Undoubtedly at one time the local forest extended right down to the water's edge, although there are few trees near the Abbey in the present day.

In Evelyn's *Diary* we read of it as "a pretty seate *in the forest*," that had "at least one parqueted floor."

AUTUMN IN THE WOODS

"Here twilight is and coolness : here is moss,
A soft seat, and a deep and ample shade"

Here, then, is evidence that the forest was, even as late as 1679, in existence on the south side of the Bath road. The house stood among the trees, "of a great wood in which might roam one hundred hogs." Even now a few fronds of bracken will sprout up round Huntercombe; but there is nothing else to show that the country has been desolated of wood; and evidently no heed was taken of the ancient covenanting of the manor, "to except the great trees and stadells from profit of the axe." Agriculture has claimed them all.

The history of a nunnery through the centuries is necessarily a record of simple things, peaceful ceremonies, and visits of distinguished prelates; but in the records of Burnham Abbey there are one or two human touches.

In the very early days there was a quarrel with Geoffrey de Bulstrode over some land in his manor which had been presented to the nuns. Geoffrey contested the claim of the Abbess, and, it is related, "he broke into her houses, wrecked her mill, cut down her hedges, corn and trees, and sent cattle to feed in her pastures, and so ill-treated her servants that she could not get anyone to serve her in that place."

In 1311 the convent had its little romance of love *versus* religion, with the inevitable heavy father thrown in—a drama that convulsed the white-souled celibate community and evoked the thunders of the Church. A certain nun, Margery of Hedsor, escaped the house and forsook the habit of religion in order to join her lover. She was excommunicated in consequence, and

the sentence was renewed at intervals until 1317, when she brought in a plea that she had been compelled by her father to enter the monastery when under age, and had been previously contracted in marriage to Roger Blacket of Rickmansworth. She preferred the consolation of Roger to the comfort of religion, and as both parties were members of important families the ban was removed after proof of the legal plea. It is instructive as showing that a ban of excommunication could be removed by the institution of a legal suit.

Again a very human and feminine note. In 1339 two nuns were transferred to Goring, "for the peace and quiet of the house." History records no details. As birds in their little nests certainly do not always agree, so in communities of charity and benevolence the devil will creep in sometimes, and has to be ejected with his own pronged fork.

In the fifteenth century the nuns had attempted to increase their revenues by taking a number of ladies as boarders; with the result that the house had become secularized. In 1431 and 1436 Bishop Grey ordered the removal of all secularists. But in 1519 the same trouble was noticed. Other signs of worldliness are revealed in the injunction that the nuns should "not use girdles ornamented with gold and silver, nor any rings."

At last the blow fell, and the Convent was disbanded by Henry VIII. In the Augmentation Office is the original surrender, and a letter from the visitors recommending the Religious to the King's favour on account

of their readiness to yield to the King's measures. The survey describes it as "The Monastery of the Order of St. Austin, value fifty-one pounds, two shillings, and fourpence; Nuns, nine; incontinent, none; all desire to go into Religious Houses. Servants, thirty-seven; hereof Priests, two; hinds, twenty-one; women, fourteen. Bells and lead worth forty pounds, sixteen shillings, and eight pence. The house in good estate. The value of the movable goods, forty-five pounds, seventeen shillings, and nine pence."

So ended Burnham Abbey, but its fine old walls still stand. The visitor, by permission of the farmer tenant, will see with regret and some dismay cows looking out of Gothic stone doorways, and corrugated iron sheds bulging from old refectory walls. Horses stamp upon the old paving-stones, and pigs befoul the once hallowed ground.

The place came into the hands of the Eyre family by marriage, or rather was allied to the Manor of Allards; and after the reign of the Eyres, who, according to a mural tablet on the walls of Burnham Church, had held the Manor for four hundred years, Lord Grenville eventually became the owner of Burnham Beeches; and the hamlet of East Burnham, which during a century had possessed several opulent families, now found itself all at once without a squire or any influential resident.

A picture of the hamlet in 1838, written by Mrs. Grote, may prove interesting, as showing how "truly rural" the neighbourhood was ere the artists discovered

the Beeches, and the Corporation of London came with their notice-boards and their roads.

"In the first place," says Mrs. Grote, "the inhabitants earned their living almost entirely by husbandry labour, neither a tailor, shoemaker, plumber, or in fact any kind of skilled artisan, was to be found in our hamlet. One old man lived by working as a bricklayer, and a young man, named James (Mendelssohn's woodman guide), bred to the trade of a wheelwright and cartmaker, could also act as carpenter and bricklayer, or almost any handicraft connected with country life. Besides the bricklayer there was the landlord of the little ale-house called The Crown, and a man named Ryder who got his living by attending markets, and again selling by retail various produce such as oats, bran, flour, poultry, pigs and pig meat—keeping a horse and cart, and also a huckster's shop on a humble scale. These formed the exception. All my other neighbours followed husbandry in all its branches, including woodcutting, hurdle-making, thatching, and sheep-shearing, etc. We could not even boast of a smith in the Liberty, though one lived hard by in the adjoining parish of Farnham; neither had we a baker! the Burnham baker bringing bread on stated days to supply the dwellers in East Burnham, only a few of whom adhered to the old practice of baking at home. The women were here and there in the habit of hawking small wood in donkey-carts to Eton and Windsor, distance four to five miles, buying wood in the copses, fetching it out, and cutting it up into little faggots called 'pimps.'

DAUGHTER OF THE WOODS

"Sometimes I am afraid the faggots were not made wholly out of such wood, but out of wood stolen by the urchins out of the copses at dusk; at least so said the wood overseers in the service of the proprietors. Again, a few of my cottagers' wives would have a lace pillow, which during the winter they would work at—lace being a traditional occupation in the county of Bucks. But after the year 1844, or thereabouts, lace-making dropped out of the list of industrial occupations—machine-made lace completely supplanting pillow-made by its low price. The women were for the most part hardworking, decent, good-hearted creatures and friendly neighbours, labouring in the fields at stone-picking, weeding wheat, reaping, gleaning, etc. etc., and going out to help wash at farmers' and gentlefolk's houses as occasion offered.

"For the male portion of the community there was, commonly speaking, a constant round of employment—somewhat more, indeed, than is usual for rustic labourers to obtain. The vast extent of woodland in the neighbourhood created a constant demand for woodcutters when hard frost and snow forbade farming operations. Thrashing machines obtained but slowly amongst the farmers round East Burnham, who thus furnished long thrashing jobs as piece work (or by the grate) to their men in hard weather. The preserving of game on the Manor absorbed many of the men as watchers and underkeepers; and, furthermore, at a season which often leaves the farm-hands slack of work, namely, while the crops are ripening after midsummer

and haymaking is pretty well over, then would our people 'fall to at cherry gathering,' a business which in a 'good bearing' time keeps scores of hands fully employed.

"The country teems with fruit in every direction, and some idea may be framed of the magnitude of the dealings in the article of cherries alone when I state that John James has for years past found it answer to spend five or six weeks at Liverpool, selling to retail fruit-vendors the produce of the district round East Burnham —his father buying up the orchards and distributing his 'gatherers' among them, and dispatching nightly by the railway well-packed baskets of cherries to his son at Liverpool.

"The women, meanwhile, earn a good penny at strawberry and raspberry gathering in the market gardens chiefly to supply the demand for this favourite fruit on the part of the eight hundred Eton boys.

"As for the boys of our hamlet, they need never be at a loss for work. At some seasons one cannot obtain a boy for love or money, as the saying goes. The girls remain at school somewhat longer than the boys, though what they learn is worth mighty little. Of the chastity of this part of Burnham population I may not boast. As in other rural districts the young women were, in some instances, mothers before they became wives; nevertheless the young men show a 'preference' for correct females in selecting their partners for life, and I am warranted in adding that the larger number of my poor neighbours possess the merits of being honest,

well-conducted wives, careful mothers, and they likewise were hard-working, sober women."

Any record of the hamlet of East Burnham would be incomplete without an allusion to Mrs. Coxe, one of the daughters of Charles Eyre, who married and left the neighbourhood, but returned in widowhood, and in her will left a sum of money to be expended in clothing and linen for her poor neighbours. All cottages in East Burnham enjoy a share. The doles are given out to this day, although their form was somewhat altered by the Charity Commissioners. The old cottages in Egypt are among those that benefit. The sum, by the way, was £2650, in Consols.

The bequest affected the interests of the labouring people to a certain degree, but it proved less advantageous than might have been expected; and that owing to an unexpected cause. The cottages carrying the gift were sought after so eagerly that the rents were put up. Accordingly the benefit intended for the cottagers was divided between them and the landlords.

These short and simple annals of the poor, recorded by the wife of the Greek historian, are wonderfully in key with the rural sentiment of the famous "Elegy." One can readily understand that Gray's residence in the neighbourhood must have materially influenced his train of thought.

Mrs. Grote also gives us an intimate glimpse of the actual tract of common that we now know as the Beeches—which is very different from the Burnham Beeches of our time; and the personality of Mr. Forbes,

the late ranger, who died at a great age, and whom she mentions, links it up with the present day.

In speaking of the period between 1839 and 1851 she says: "I frequently tried to see Lady Grenville's steward for the purpose of asking his assistance in repairing parts of the causeways, in repressing the abuse of pigs in pasturation, in keeping up pond heads, in preventing injury being done to old trees, in relieving stoppages of the conduits, or reservoirs, and many similar matters. But on no occasion could I obtain his personal co-operation. The pigs were suffered to disfigure the whole neighbourhood, turned out loose without rings in their noses. It was the duty of the steward to compel the owners to put rings in them if they were turned loose, and to cause the 'hogwarden,' or 'Hayward,' or 'Howard' (as this ancient function has come to be designated) to impound ringless hogs.

"No heed was taken of my repeated application for the steward's interference on this point, and the pigs ran riot over the Beeches, ploughing up whole roods of close green turf every autumn. Not only the hogs belonging to the inhabitants, but droves of these animals were brought from miles round, and came grunting into the forest, searching for the beech masts for weeks together, unchecked by the manorial officers. The roads in the Liberty were neglected, and suffered to become disgraceful both from the accumulation of mud and the deep ruts. The ditches, rarely 'scoured,' were full of stagnant water; the water ran over the roads and wore gutters in them, though an hour's work would

BURNHAM BEECHES—DUKE'S DRIVE AT THE EGYPT END

have cleared a passage down a ditch at the side. The mud was overshoes deep, the hedges were never trimmed, and the trees dripped upon the road (Lady Grenville's steward prohibiting their being lopped), the ruts were deepened by the heavy-wheeled wains, and, in short, there was widespread indifference to the condition of all the bye-roads round East Burnham. Not only were new tenements not built in the place of the old ones, but space was grudged for pigsties, which in the case of the dwellers in the 'courtyards' were placed close to the cottage doors, forming an ensemble strictly resembling a cluster of Irish cabins.

"We were informed that Mr. Bowman, the steward, was dismissed from his office, and in his stead a new steward had been appointed who was to live in Cornwall, and only visit Dropmore occasionally, to hold courts, receive rents, and the like. Meanwhile a youth named Forbes[1] announced himself to the inhabitants as acting steward, or deputy, whose duty it was to watch over the interests of the Manor, but was bound to refer all important matters to the gentleman at the 'Lands End.'"

The masterful lady soon "got across" with Mr. Forbes. And who did not who dared to interfere with his beloved Beeches?—even in 1906. She proclaimed her right to cut turves from the Common for her greenhouse, and goes on to say, "while my people were loading the turves we were accosted by the young man Forbes,

[1] It must be very interesting to the present inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who remember Mr. Forbes, the late ranger, who died at an advanced age in 1907, to read of him in 1855.

who said that Madam Grote has no right to take turf off the Common, and that he had a great mind to seize the cart and the men employed therewith before the justices for trespassing, and so forth. However, he limited his proceedings to angry talk, and the men carted home the turf." (How like him!)

"A few days after this Mr. Forbes came to my residence and inquired for me. I happened to be out, but returning within a short space I found the young man awaiting me in the garden next the road. Mr. Forbes rejoined that Lady Grenville had now resolved to enforce strictly her manorial rights and that he should fine me on her behalf for having committed a trespass. I answered that he had better try to fine me, and it might perhaps lead to a legal investigation of her rights, which would be attended with useful results. Mr. Forbes was civil, and no wise wanting in respectful manners, but appeared to be acting simply in conformity with instructions received from his principals."

Note how the manorial rights began to tighten. The inhabitants felt that Lady Grenville was seeking to establish an *absolute*, as well as manorial, right in the soil, giving the same away out of the parish in any quantity she thought fit, in the form of turves, and preventing any one but herself from using the soil unless specially authorized.

Mrs. Grote found that a "court" had been held out of the limits of the Manor, at Hook End, and that at this same court (held in 1857), though the jury was composed of persons entitled to be upon it, the business

was carried on with closed doors. Unfortunately Lady Grenville's steward had given the villagers to understand that whoever moved in the matter of furnishing information tending to question her ladyship's supremacy would be immediately turned out of their tenements. This menace had the effect of tying up the tongues of all her tenants, and inducing them to make no further "stir."

Mrs. Grote could not forgive the aged Lady Grenville, but she goes on to exonerate Mr. Forbes.

"Of the young man who acted as subordinate steward I have never had any cause to complain personally. When I have represented to him any abuse of the privileges of the inhabitants of the Liberty he has endeavoured to correct it, especially in the case of herds of hogs, which latterly overran Burnham Beeches, rooting up (as I have stated) many roods of turf in search of beech masts and acorns, befouling the pathways with their filth, and even molesting timid people by their audacious defiant approach." (Their audacious defiant approach is delicious.) "Mr. Forbes did try to impound many pigs that were found without rings, but the difficulty of driving them out of the woodland was well-nigh insurmountable when once they had got in."

"The origin of all this lay in the destruction of eight or ten gates which formerly protected the Liberty against intruding animals, many of which were extant when I first came to East Burnham. Gates having sufficient latches would have kept out all unauthorized pigs, and it was the duty of the ratepayers to compel the surveyor of the

roads to uphold these gates, but as the surveyors were tenants of Lady Grenville, as were the ratepayers, every item of expenditure which could be evaded *was* evaded.

"The poor were left without anybody to care for them, except an occasional visit from the curate, 'all trembling at the nod of the steward,' whilst the farmers, backed by this functionary, managed the whole affairs of the hamlet between them."

Residents in Farnham and Farnham Royal will be interested in this word-picture of East Burnham Common in 1842.

"Cricket was regularly played during the summer on Sunday afternoons by all the men and lads of the vicinity. The Common indeed presented a lively and pleasing aspect, dotted with parties of cheerful lookers-on, and many women and children and old persons, among which we ourselves, and our servants, not infrequently mingled. About the year 1842 and 1843 some boys of our hamlet having been taken up and carried before the Beaconsfield bench for playing cricket on a Sunday, and fined fifteen shillings each or six weeks in Aylesbury Jail, the practice of playing cricket was effectually checked in Burnham, the young men and boys, having henceforth no form of pastime, spent their afternoons in the beer-shops, or played skittles in the public-houses, or prowled about the lanes looking for birds'-nests, game, 'hare runs,' and the like, while the Common was lonely and empty of loungers."

The last, and perhaps the most important, stage in the history of the Liberty began when the neighbour-

"A noise like a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleepy woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune"

hood was flung into a state of excitement by the announcement of its proposed sale by auction at Token-house Yard on the 24th day of June 1879. At first there were no purchasers, and it was rather suspected that the manorial rights over the land of the Beeches—which Mrs. Grote so nobly contested—were none too secure.

Mr. Francis George Heath then suggested that the Corporation of London should buy the place as a play-ground for the metropolis. There was plenty of money from the corn and coal dues; but the "lot" could not be divided, and the Corporation had no power to acquire any but the common land. Sir H. W. Peake stepped in and purchased a large tract and divided it up, waiting the convenience of the Corporation to buy the portion it required. The woods are now entirely controlled from London, and reverently tended. Trees that would have fallen are wired and supported, and others have been lightened by relieving their overloaded tops of immense boughs which would most certainly have come to earth, ripping up the hollow shells of bark on which they hang. Each winter works havoc, but there are some centuries of life still left in many of the sounder trees.

There is an impression abroad that the place is overrun with trippers and school treats, but this is not the case. The noisier visitors do not come till the afternoon, and even then confine themselves chiefly to "The Plain," a space of a few acres near the refreshment houses. The rest is a noble solitude.

CHAPTER V

THE ARTISTS—TREES IN ART

IT is difficult to say when the artists discovered Burnham Beeches, but Luttrell's frivolous verses show that they frequented it in 1829. Gradually the Liberty became fashionable, providing painters with all that was necessary for the making of pretty pictures —woodland pools, graceful overhanging birches, giant beeches, waving bracken, and running rills. Their works must have found favour, for in time a large colony was established. The local farmhouses received the students, and the men provided themselves with huts, which were dotted about in the loveliest portions of the woodland, especially near the ponds. These structures, which later were described by an indignant reformer as "crosses between bathing machines and hen coops," increased in number, until they proved an active irritation.

The Corporation, having taken possession of the place, began to turn the cart-tracks into metalled roads. At once there was an outcry from the more conservative portion of the art community, and the plaint went up that vandals were abroad, and the pristine beauty of the forest doomed.

Perhaps so, in some respects, but the present generation finds no fault with the dry and convenient highways that followed the reign of the hogs. It also became necessary, for the saving of some of the older trees, to remove the undergrowth and open up the thickets which were hiding the veteran beeches. Also to remove a number of birches.

Again the souls of the artists were fretted, and fiery letters appeared in the London and local papers. Withering was the sarcasm of the painters, whose knowledge of forestry was apparently of the scantiest. There was talk of destruction; yet they desired Nature's own ravages to continue unchecked. Overloaded tree-tops, which have ruined many of the best trees, were relieved of their "top hamper" by judicious pruning. More vandalism! More curling lips and bitter sneers! More flinging up of hands and lamentations by the lovers of the picturesque.

Lovers of the picturesque indeed! That claim was their undoing. Real Nature lovers, who, like Mendelssohn, found peace and inspiration in the silent solitudes, raised an outcry against the artists' hideous huts, which were dotted everywhere in the choicest vistas, and proved an eyesore and a nuisance.

Result, the total prohibition and abolition of the huts.

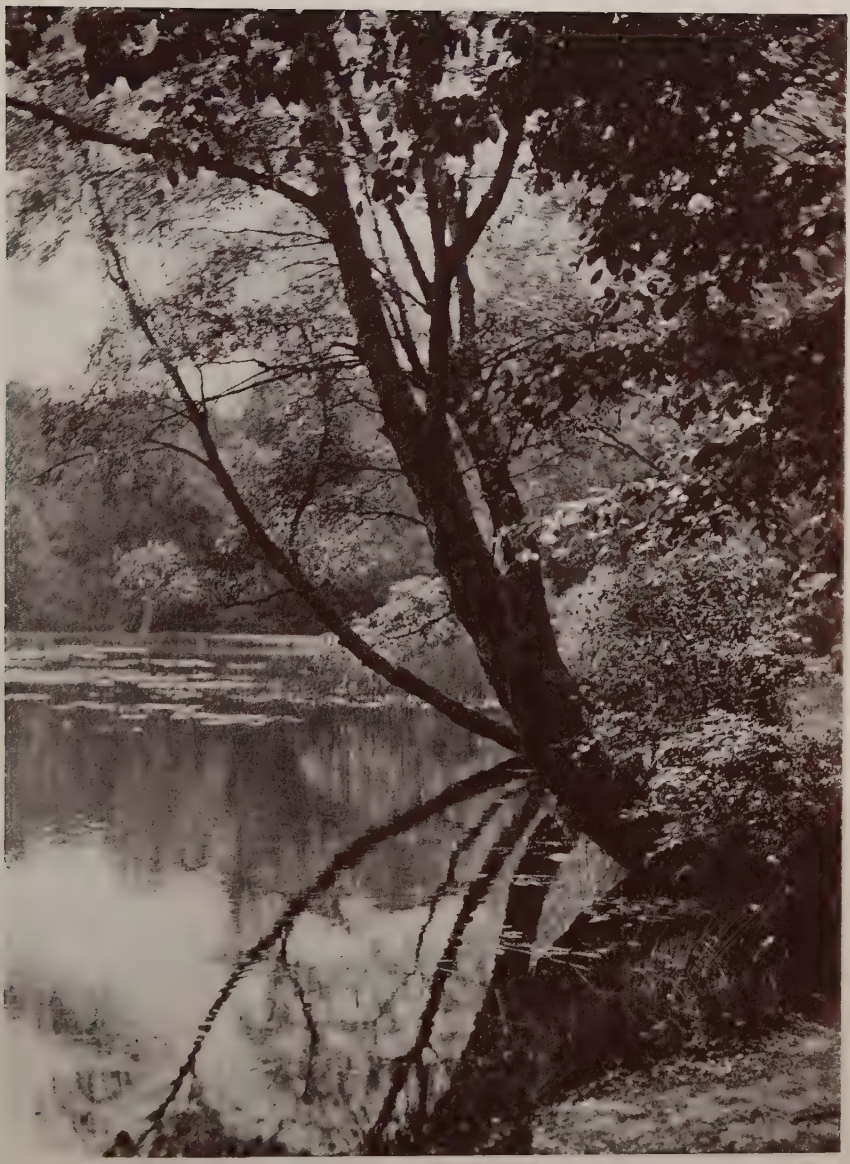
The wild tangle round the ponds was checked, the impassable boglands were drained, and the three pools, known respectively as the Red Sea, the Middle Pond, and the Swilly, were made more accessible and gained in picturesqueness. The artists who were

loudest in their outcries have since lived to admit the improvement.

While upon the subject of the ponds it should be explained that they are not all natural pools. The second and third ponds are self-formed, but the first or upper pond was made for extra accommodation in sheep-shearing time; that was when the Common was not covered with ling, heather, and gorse, as now; or spoiled, as some people think, by the occasional clumps of imported firs. It was then the common grazing ground in the Liberty, to which farmers round sent their cattle and sheep in hundreds. Within the memory of living inhabitants these ponds were staked out in pens, and the washing and shearing went on all round them. Two pools were not enough at sheep-shearing time, and the third was added. It must have been a busy scene.

The local name of the Red Sea, given to the Middle Pond, has an origin comparatively recent. After years of stagnation the pool was drained and cleaned, and, at the end near the dam, a great number of bones were brought out. At first they were supposed to be the skeletons of men; but investigation proved them to be those of beasts who had fallen over at this deep and dangerous end of the pool and been drowned. At the same time some black beech-wood, hard and black as bog oak from years of immersion, was extracted from the mud.

It is a curious thing about beech-wood that if it is exposed to the elements it will rot as quickly, or more quickly, than other wood; immerse it in water,



BURNHAM BEECHES—THE MIDDLE POND

or dry it, and it will last for ever, as explained in an earlier chapter. This wood had lain below water for many a year, like the piles of the prehistoric dwellings at Hedsor.

Water in the woods is always charming, mysterious, and attractive. A visit to these beautiful hidden ponds is an indispensable part of the exploration of the forest.

A gleam of upward light streaks through the serried ranks of tree-trunks, proclaiming water in the hollow. Tread warily. Moss and fern, and luscious spongy grass, give warning of a wider water area than reflects the cloud-forms of the sky. Everywhere the greenest of green moss, most vivid at the roots. Plants that love the water—amphibious things content to wither in the drought or stifle in the deluge—are crowding to the edge of the pond. The thickets jostle roughly in the scramble, bristling with offensiveness, and warding off the bending trees with interlocking hands. Brambles come to slake their thirst and glut their veins with needless juices; all the edge is choked with greedy, wallowing vegetation. Sedge grass struggles with the fleur-de-lis, water-lilies cover all the centre, kingcups linger in the outer channels, and tiny flowerets spangle all the mosses.

Of course the ubiquitous birch is craning at the very edge with roots awash. Bog or sand, chalk or gravel, matters little to the forest gadabout. She preens her feathery plumes, and droops Narcissus-like over the edge, pleased with her reflection in the mirror.

All Nature dips towards the water. There is no

picture that can compare with a limpid woodland pool in autumn; when the setting sun glows on a row of silver birch stems, and the yellow foliage is mirrored in the lake. All the soft placidity of evening is duplicated in the vasty vault beneath. There is just a strip of green reality in between; for the stable earth has disappeared, and we stand upon a precipice with untold fathoms at our feet—heaven below as well as above, magically transposed, with round water-lily leaves floating in the under sky.

There is another kind of pool, where water has invaded the domain of the trees and flooded their roots, nourishing some, debilitating others, so that in the autumn fall the water's surface is a mosaic of little leaves, a tessera of wondrous colour and pattern, broken here and there with rheumatic fallen boughs, dead and floating, like suicides. The multifarious processes of nature, warring with one another in their ceaseless activity, are here in hopeless, inextricable confusion. Branches have spread out at random, dipping to the pool, all in the wild fight for water and light. There is even an exaggerated luxuriance, stimulated by the abundance of the moisture.

The artist is always happy in scenes like this; the water draws him irresistibly: but, alas! Art has fallen on evil times in so far as this particular locality is concerned, and very few easels are now to be seen in the familiar haunts; although it is safe to say that never a week passes but one brother, or sister, of the brush sets out to make a picture.

All of them surrender to the charm of my Lady

Birch, and it has become a byword in London that every picture of Burnham Beeches shows the form of Burnham Birches; so much so, indeed, that the Cockney has mixed the trees up, and talks of the silver beech, meaning the silver birch.

We English, with the blood of the ancient Britons in our veins, love trees, and any representation of them is popular. But it has always seemed to the author that the artists have shirked the obvious task of translating to canvas the majesty and dignity of the forest giants. If a mere amateur photographer may be permitted to dogmatize, their choice of compositions were more often those which were easiest and prettiest—prettiest in the trivial sense, pictures often quite devoid of real sentiment.

The sentiment of trees in art is a very subtle and elusive thing, but real nevertheless. To analyse it would require many words. Different artists render the same scenes, and use the same models, with strangely dissimilar results, according to their temperaments.

One is provoked to wonder what is that elusive quality which gives "romance" to a landscape? What the magic of Corot's trees, which, by the droop of a bough, or combination of plume-like masses, express a mood of amorous melancholy? Why is it that the little figures of the dancing maidens, gleaming notes of colour beneath the embowering trees, give no idea of gaiety, but rather intensify the restful, peaceful luxuriance of the vale?

The distant vista indicates a stretch of glorious

promise, a land of plenty, of warmth, of beauty and fertility; a place where suns sink in glory and rise in fairy mists; where fruit is heavy in the orchards, and the vine is bending with the grape. All this is understandable as the result of direct suggestion; but a clouding of the tree-tops, the droop of a silver birch, the pollarded trunk of a willow jutting from a ditch, and all is changed.

No wood lore is needed to read the message of the artist; a sweet sadness pervades the scene. Here is melancholy at midday, and we like it. But why the melancholy? Why do dark and heavy pines indicate sadness? Their moanings we know are mournful; but they are silent in pictures, yet their appeal is the same.

A tall straight pine on a lonely hill, set high against a vast expanse of sky, is eloquent of loneliness; but why would not a mountain ash do just as well to indicate the spirit of the scene? A stricken oak on a blasted heath proclaims disaster dire; but why not a stricken poplar? What do the crooked arms of the denuded oak suggest to humanity?

These are questions which, perhaps, the cultured artist can answer from his text-books, but the whole subject of the romance of trees is far too subtle to be interpreted by syllables and taught in primers.

It is not always the influence of colour, for it is apparent, sometimes more apparent, in monochrome. Nor is it due to the actual formation of definite varieties of trees. In the pictures of Claude and Turner, and all the earlier landscapists, considerable licence was taken

A WOODLAND POOL

with foliage. Constable began the combination of realism with poetry and natural atmosphere. Turner, on the other hand, adapted tree shapes to suit his purposes as shamelessly as he filled the sails of ships riding in the contrary direction to the wind. His foliage was moulded to express a desired sentiment without too nice a consideration of its species. A convenient tree from Scotland found its way into an Italian panorama, and vice versa; frequently with adaptation and modification.

To understand how right this was, and how much the poetry of art depends upon the individual feeling of the artist, it is only necessary to go out into the woods with a camera when they are thrilling with strange and wonderful lights. It will then be found impossible, even with the most faithful record of composition, line, and leafage which the lens will secure, to capture anything of the spirit of the emotions set up by the original scene. The shapes are in the captured picture, but not the sentiment of the scene, without which a work of art is dead, uninspired, inarticulate.

The effect secured with the camera will, as often as not, express an utterly different range of ideas, a different time of day, another sort of wood. A dark and gloomy, cavern-like interior can best be secured on a brilliant sunny day; moonlight effects at midday, and so on. This is the reason for so much "fake" at the photographic exhibitions. Many a "Dawn of day" was photographed at sunset, "Evening mists" at dawn. It is notorious that photographic clouds are "dropped in";

sometimes with strong shadows on the left of the rollers, while the trees below are casting theirs to the right.

"Fake," sirs, "fake." But if the effect is all right does it really matter that the clouds were taken from London Bridge and the trees in Ashdown Forest? Are the creations of an artist who sits over a coke stove and paints a six-foot by four canvas from a post card memorandum necessarily untrue in spirit?

I know a distinguished landscapist who is passionately fond of bad woodland photographs—technically bad that is. The hazier and blacker they are the better. They give him inspiration. In that hollow under the trees he sees a cave; that broken white path becomes a brook, those tree-stumps are rocks. It is a bit of Devon, of which he has many records in colour sketches but nothing that will make a composition. No copying this, nor photographic foundation; the sun-picture gives just the necessary mental stimulus, a suggestion, a gathering together of the nebulous records stored away in the chambers of his memory.

As an example of the peculiar relation of tree harmony to musical harmony, it may be interesting to record a simple experiment which the writer tried at a lecture on trees, where many of the pictures found in this book were employed and thrown upon a twenty-foot screen by the aid of limelight. The pictures were exhibited to a musical accompaniment, and the slides employed were printed in what photographers call warm tones and cold tones, various shades of sepia and black. The music selected was Rubinstein's Melody, Mendels-

sohn's Spring Song, and other compositions rich in melody. The instruments were the piano and 'cello.

The pictures were thrown upon the screen, beginning with darkness and gradually lightening until the full force of the powerful limelight was in play. After half a minute a picture died down and another gradually took its place, and so on.

At the first rehearsal a dozen pictures were chosen haphazard and shown on a screen while the mournful 'cello sang its song. It was discovered, first of all, that sudden transitions of colour, black to sepia, were offensive. Again, open landscape following a dark woodland interior jarred. A picture with a house in it was almost a laughable incongruity.

A most careful selection was made for Rubinstein's Melody, pictures of noble trees, with here and there a weary human figure unobtrusively set in the distance. Everything restful, sad, or stately.

The Spring Song plainly demanded light pictures, the brighter the better; and the black and white slides were the best. The music practically selected suitable pictures. The daintest foliage, the brightest vistas, with sometimes a girlish figure in white engaged in occupations sympathetic to the scene (such as plucking flowers), were obviously most appropriate to the Spring Song, and wholly in keeping with the lilt of the melody.

The music was rehearsed at home, with the pictures thrown upon a six-foot screen; but when they came to be enlarged to twenty feet before a deeply attentive audience some modifications were necessary. The

whole experiment was interesting, but crude, and not practicable as an artistic thing without repeated rehearsals. In the theatre, with a full orchestra and complete coloured scenic effects, there are established conventions in the way of musical accompaniment; but it would no doubt be easy for a musical enthusiast to carry the wedding of melody and tree form in woodland pictures to a delightful unity. The minor music is always the more sympathetic to the trees. Perhaps in the theory that "there is nothing good or god-like in the world but has in it something of human sadness" we can find the explanation. The music of the wind in the leaves runs in a minor key; perhaps we unconsciously miss it in the silence and stillness of the painted image.

. . . . . .

But let us get back to our Beeches. Do not be alarmed if in some quiet walk you hear a sudden scuttering among the ground leaves, and see a glittering snake making for the nearest patch of cover; it is only a grass snake, and quite harmless. If you can intercept and turn one of them over with a walking-stick, you will find it beautifully damascened underneath with black and white.

The jays do not like your presence in their solitudes, and will scream and scold you. The squirrels are in the upper branches of the older trees, but they are shy and retiring; so are the magnificent owls, for which the woods are famous. After dark, big brown and white fellows swoop from tree to tree with silent flight; but it takes sharp eyes to see their hiding-places. The night-

BURNHAM BEECHES

'But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales: and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove

jar begins to work his "sewing-machine" early on a summer evening, and continues with maddening persistence until the dawn. The woodpecker is busy everywhere. He loves to find a hollow birch and bore his round front door into the cavity which he has discovered by judicious tapping and sounding. The quaint little brown tree-creeper, rather like a sparrow, but smaller, can be watched making his spiral traverse of the bigger trees; but be very still if you would see him at work. Robins abound; attracted, no doubt, by the crumbs left by the picnic parties. They haunt their own particular corner, the Plain, but will often accompany you on your round, retiring in disgust when there are no sandwiches or biscuit crumbs. They are surprisingly tame. On one occasion a cheeky little redbreast mounted on to the top of my "reflex," and looked down the hood at the miniature landscape in the mirror, with his head on one side and an expression of alarmed astonishment in his eye. Inquisitive as well as friendly.

Lord Burnham's preserves adjoin the Beeches, and the pheasants which he zealously rears wander over the bracken of the Common. Huge flocks of wood-pigeons wheel over the tree-tops as the winter comes on, but they do not settle much, unless hard-driven for food. The timorous hare is there still, in spite of the enormous number of dogs belonging to the residents—it is a very doggy neighbourhood, most people having two, and some ladies a rabble of twenty.

The fox naturally finds cover and brings the hounds through the forest in the winter; and the hunted stag,

if loosed anywhere in the neighbourhood, makes for the woodland by instinct. If the writers of indignant letters to the Press, who desire the suppression of this sport, could only see the bored, indolent way in which these creatures go to work in the forest to confound the huntsman, they would not be so passionate in their condemnation. In the surrounding woods there are bogs, unpleasant and dangerous; the stag leads the horses there, and so escapes. It is the huntsmen who protest; the stag grazes in weary nonchalance.

Those who enter the Beeches from the Thames Valley, in the spring, by way of Dropmore and Littleworth Common, will be delighted with the brave display of rhododendrons which line Halse Drive and grow in wild profusion. The Australian azalea, a pale gold relative, exquisite in perfume, rears its crests of bloom in lesser profusion, and springs up in many parts of the forest, but chiefly in Halse Drive.

According to the old inhabitants, flowers in quantity used to bloom in the woods; now they are only a recollection. In Lady Grenville's time excursionists used to hunt for roots and carry them away in great quantities. Delicate ferns flourish on the boundary banks, but they are not prolific enough to withstand the constant raids upon them. The bracken is hardy and indestructible, but does not, of course, flourish much beneath the beech trees; nothing but the holly and a few hardy evergreens can live beneath their light-excluding canopy. But bracken grows at the Egypt end to a general height of about five feet under the

birches. When it can climb upwards, supported by the stem of the holly—which is often its foster-mother —it runs to a height of ten and twelve feet.

The tract between Duke's Drive and Stewart's Drive (Egypt end) is the wildest of all, and in tramping through the breast-high bracken it seems incredible that there can be houses within hail. One is lost in a few minutes; and, as the landscape changes strangely with the season, it is not always easy to recognize well-known spots after an absence of a few weeks.

The wonderful velvet moss, of vivid glinting green colour and plush-like texture, the despair of artists, is the most effective of all the ground plants. No other forest has it. Children are speechless with delight when they first behold it, and their elders cannot forbear to touch it, to be sure that it is real. There is a period when its colour is dimmed, but it is always there. It comes away from the loamy earth in handfuls, clean and soft and cool. Sometimes it grows in little buttons, about two inches across, which detach themselves from the ground and are the same underneath as on top. They can be pinned on to a lady's hat, where they provoke unfailing feminine curiosity.

Other blooms which are common are ling and heather, the golden furze, harebell, foxgloves, and crested cow-wheat, the tiny yellow flower of which flames out like fairy torches in the undergrowth, common scabious, wild orchid, spurge, and, on the Common, the sundew insect-eating plant.

But enough in praise of Burnham Beeches. In

conclusion just a few jingling verses written by Luttrell the wit (!) in 1829, which are cherished by the peasantry of the neighbourhood as something amazingly fine :—

"A bard, dear Muse, unapt to sing,
Your friendly aid beseeches :
Help me to touch the lyric string
In praise of Burnham Beeches.

What though my tributary lines
Be less like Pope's than Creeche's,
The theme, if not the poet, shines,
So bright are Burnham Beeches.

O'er many a dell and upland walk,
Their sylvan beauty reaches,
Of Birnam Wood let Scotland talk
While we've our Burnham Beeches.

Oft do I linger, oft return,
(Say, who my taste impeaches?)
Where holly, juniper and fern,
Spring up round Burnham Beeches.

Though deep embower'd their shades among,
The owl at midnight screeches,
Birds of far merrier, sweeter song,
Enliven Burnham Beeches.

If "sermons be in stones," I'll bet
Our vicar, when he preaches,
Will find it easier far to get
A hint from Burnham Beeches.

Their glossy rind here winter stains,
Here the hot solstice bleaches :
Bow stubborn oaks!—Bow graceful planes!
Ye match not Burnham Beeches.

Gardens may boast a tempting show
Of nectarines, grapes and peaches,
But dainty truffles lurk below
The boughs of Burnham Beeches.

"Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display
And part admit, and part exclude the day"

When monks, by holy Church well schooled,
  Were lawyers, statesmen, leeches,
Cured souls and bodies, judged or ruled,
  Then flourished Burnham Beeches,

Skirting the convent's walls of yore,
  As yonder ruin teaches;
But shaven crown and cowl no more
  Shall darken Burnham Beeches.

Here bards have mused—here lovers true
  Have dealt in softest speeches,
While suns declined, and, parting, threw
  Their gold o'er Burnham Beeches.

O ne'er may woodman's axe resound,
  Nor tempest making breaches,
In the sweet shade that cools the ground
  Beneath our Burnham Beeches!

Hold!—though I'd fain be jingling on,
  My power no further reaches.
Again that rhyme? Enough! I've done;
  Farewell to Burnham Beeches!"

HENRY LUTTRELL

II. SHERWOOD FOREST

CHAPTER VI

WHEN LIONS ROAMED IN SHERWOOD

THERE must be some magic in the atmosphere of Sherwood, for it has been beloved by men and frequented by the wild creatures of the earth for five thousand years. Not far remote, on the verge of Derbyshire, are the Creswell Crags, where, in the cavernous hollows that undermine the cliffs on either side of the stream, geologists have unearthed the bones of mammoths, leopards, lions, and prehistoric man—dark strongholds where the hyenas dragged the bones of their prey to make a record for future historians more indelible than scrolls of papyrus in the tombs of the Assyrians.

These fastnesses, now known as Robin Hood's Caves, were originally formed by a rushing torrent which scored the earth's surface and left high-standing rocks on either side of the stream. And here, when Britain was a tropical swamp, the beasts came down to drink, and died, or fell upon one another, the prey of carnivora more ferocious than themselves. Next primeval man

CRESWELL CRAGS, SHERWOOD FOREST

dispossessed the beasts, and converted their lairs to domestic strongholds and shelters from the icy winds and blinding snows of the later glacial period.

Thousands of years after, the ancient Britons, doubtless inheriting from their ancestors the knowledge that Sherwood was a comfortable place of refuge in Nature's bosom, tenanted the old caves beside the now gentle water-way. The raging torrent was become a peaceful stream running between the hills of a country none too generously supplied with water; and thither came the stags to drink all through the five hundred years of the Roman occupation. The Saxons hunted here; the Normans marked it out as a Royal chase; and Royal it remained till Robin Hood, of undying fame, seized the forest fastness, and held it with his merry men, taking toll of venison, robbing fat abbots, and dispensing favours to the humbler inheritors of a free forest tradition extending back over the whole period of human life upon earth.

And, as if to show how covetable is the western side of the fair county of Nottingham, it is to-day the chosen home of feudal lords of ancient lineage—for what was once Sherwood Forest is now "the Dukeries."

To deal with it exhaustively would be impossible under several volumes. One of the fairest spots of the earth, it has naturally drawn to it men of power and strife, and is held at the present day by the descendants of nobles figuring prominently in our country's history. As playground and fortress it has been the retreat of great and small, of kings of pleasure and kings of war. In Stephen's troublous days the woods re-echoed with the

clang of arms. In the Wars of the Roses it was traversed by the opposing forces. In 1484 the decisive battle of Stoke was fought near Newark; and later the Civil War of Charles was both begun and ended at Nottingham close by. It was at Nottingham Castle that the Royal Standard was upraised for war; and at Kirkwell is the ancient inn at which Charles dined ere he yielded up his person to his foe. Thus we are on historic ground.

Its present title of "the Dukeries" is derived from the fact that within its borders are the princely homes of the Dukes of Portland (Welbeck), Newcastle (Clumber), Norfolk, Leeds, and Kingston; although there is no Duke of Kingston nowadays, and both Norfolk and Leeds have parted with their estates; but Earl Manvers, as representative of the Kingston family, maintains the best traditions at Thoresby.

The Welbeck and Clumber estates reach right up to the town of Worksop, and by the Thoresby portion of the forest they range to Creswell in the direction of Mansfield. The drive round the forest extends for nearly thirty miles, through magnificent scenery in which rolling woodland is a characteristic feature, but by no means omnipresent, for agriculture claims a great portion of the ancient forest tract. The stewards of the ducal estates, while preserving the old character of wood and heath, are good foresters, and grow trees scientifically and picturesquely.

The ancient value of Sherwood oak for the Navy is a thing of the past; and knee timber, of which the crooked oak is the best example, is no longer a necessity

SHERWOOD FOREST—ONE OF "ROBIN HOOD'S CAVES

for the cutting of angles and curves in ship building. The marketable value of oak nowadays is dependent upon the absence rather than the presence of side boughs (which mean knots), and the estate forester's aim is to coax his trees to the skies like poplars. In the newer plantations are oaks mounting straight and tall like scaffold poles, set at fairly even distances, and offering long vistas down lines of sentinels towards a distant strip of sky-line. All very charming in its way; but lacking the wild riot of nature, and the unexpected twists and turn of lines which go to the making of pictures.

At Edwinstowe the old inhabitants still remember, and talk, of "the great fall," when a beautiful valley towards Clumber was felled, and the timber taken to Grimsby for ship building. Iron walls and steel girders have superseded wood even in the Merchant Service, but our British oak is still the finest in the world; highest esteemed of woods, most durable under fire and water, or when exposed to the elements; even surviving the lightning, and pointing fingers of derision at the clouds that have split and rent their boles asunder. On some of these Sherwood oaks the lightning stroke has inflicted no more serious injury than the passage of, say, a hundred years of time.

Creswell Crags, on the verge of Sherwood, in which the prehistoric cave dwellings still remain, consists of two ranges of rocks, a quarter of a mile in length, varying in height from thirty to eighty feet, with a rivulet running between, now dammed up to form a triangular lake which at this point divides the two

counties of Nottingham and Derbyshire. The crags are of magnesian limestone, tufted with maple, hazel, oak, alder, and ivy; and on the north side are the caves, known as Pin Hole, Dog Hole, Robin Hood's Cave, Mother Grundy's Parlour, and Little John's Cavern. On the south side the only one of any size is Church Hole. In 1876 the caverns were minutely examined by experts in connection with a meeting of the British Association, and the long list of discoveries then, and subsequently, included the bones of lions, mammoths, leopards, and bears, as well as a multitude of hyenas; also the bison, the rhinoceros, the arctic fox, and many extinct creatures, or at least extinct in so far as our island is concerned. Human bones were also found, the remains of the early Stone Age; together with rude weapons and carvings on stone, superior in art to ancient Egyptian work of a similar kind and period. There were also discovered Saxon grave ornaments, and fragments of Roman pottery; all illustrating the gradual development from the rudely wrought implements of the Paleolithic hunter to the artistic relics of the British and Welsh refugees.

The discoveries are a scientific fact beyond dispute; and the entrances to the caves remain barred and fenced because further investigations are intended.

How natural that Robin Hood and his merry men should seek these roomy shelters, and that tradition should identify specific caves and give them historic names—although, to be sure, there are churls who deny that Robin Hood himself ever existed.

Perish the thought that our valiant lord of the Greenwood may be only a romantic forest myth! The story of his exploits must never be submitted to the dissecting knife of modern literary surgery.

No, in Sherwood we are treading in the footsteps of romance. They point us out Robin Hood's own particular tree; and the present-day descendants of his merry men make joyous pilgrimages to the Major Oak, the Greendale Oak, Robin Hood's Larder, and Creswell Crags, as to the shrines of a God of Liberty. Alas! they only wander in the forest glades by permission of the ducal overlords, whose ancestors fastened upon the soil and established those sacred aristocratic rights of tenure which are the bulwarks of our national tenacity and respectability. The very woodland tracks which for thousands of years have been free to passing feet, are, in this twentieth century, plentifully labelled with ducal notices and barred by ducal gates.

And all for the protection of game! The hunting passion still survives; but the gallows is supplanted by the magisterial bench; for your modern duke still loves his coverts, though the game be only hand-bred pheasants instead of the good red deer.

Of Sherwood Forest itself—which at one time covered most of the western half of the shire, from Nottingham to Mansfield and Worksop—only a small portion remains. But the part accessible to the ordinary visitor is the genuine thing, although no longer Royal. It has not the wild beauty nor the luxurious under-

growth which distinguishes London's Burnham Beeches, but retains a dignity of its own, suggestive of sturdy strength and venerable age; its glades and depths still hold the silence, that haunting and impalpable stillness which can be felt, and on occasion makes cowards of us all.

The oaks have obviously braved the tempests of many centuries; their tops have nearly all fallen victims to the wind, giving the older trees a defiant air suggestive of many things in English character. One understands here why man has always venerated the oak, and why its virtues of strength and stolidity should be proudly claimed as twin characteristics of our British national character.

The old boles rising from the earth, like towers of iron, are solid in most cases; though here and there are hollow shells which will enfold a dozen men or more. The Pride of the Forest is, of course, the Major Oak, one of the largest trees in Britain. It is in an almost perfect state of preservation. Eighteen men have packed themselves within its hollow shell, according to its keeper—an old man whose sole duty is to guard it from Good Friday onwards through the summer. He sits beneath its shade in meditative solitude, and plays the part of guide, counsellor, and friend to adventurous trippers, wood carvers, and souvenir hunters.

You cannot approach Sherwood Forest without learning of the Major Oak. It has given its name to inns, tea-rooms, and bun shops, and is a landmark in the county, sharing the honours with the Green-

SHERWOOD FOREST

'Oh, most lame and impotent conclusion

Othello

dale Oak, which also confronts you on signboards everywhere.

There are, roughly, two divisions of the forest, known as Birkland and Billagh, which represent the old forest fastness of the days of Robin Hood. Here authors and poets have wandered and rhapsodized, assuming, rather freely, the questionable licence of attributing anything up to two thousand years to the seven-century-old trees which form the majority of those now standing. Witness the panegyric of William Howitt in his *Rural Life in England.*

"At the Clipstone extremity of the forest still remains a remnant of its ancient woodlands unrifled except of its deer: a specimen of what the whole once was, and a specimen of consummate beauty and interest. . . . These were the trees under which King John pursued the red deer six hundred years ago. These were the oaks beneath which Robin Hood led up his bold band of outlaws. These are the oaks which have stood while king after king reigned. . . . Here they stood while the monarchy of England fell to the ground before Cromwell and his covenanters."

Again, Christopher Thomson: "There stand a cluster of lightning scathed columns, bereft of pediment and entablature: silent memorials of the march of time, dumb mouths preaching to us of the nothingness of human life: moralizing, with a philosophy peculiarly their own, upon the ages which they have seen come like shadows and so depart. Although they are old, scathed looking, and nearly half-dismantled, yet they

look down upon us with a cynical smile, saying to the poor admirers, 'Vain babbler, talkest thou of deeds done, of life-long years, and renowned days of Egypt, Spain and Waterloo? Where wert thou when Cressy and Agincourt were won? Where did'st thou live when Ascalon fell and Palestine was conquered? Didn't thou ever see the Roman eagles flout the air? Wert thou at all acquainted with Arthur or Wessex, Egbert or Albert? I remember them all. I was a grown man when that said Robin Hood you boast about was driven to take shelter amongst us. By my reckoning, a few years ago, he was hunted from your cities by armed men, spurred on by wicked laws. . . .

"'I could fill up the years of thy life with such tales: I could tell thee of Druids' fires; of roses red and white; of plumed knights and beauteous ladies. I could tell thee stories of all ages.'"

Thus have the old trees inspired many a poet with rapture, and philosophers with food for speculation on the mysterious continuity of nature. Man is such a transitory thing that one is inspired to ask what is the secret of his relationship to the eternal processes of the world?—or is there no relationship? He who meditates in the great untrodden, primeval forests of Asia, for instance, surrounded by a luxuriance of Nature so mysterious in its relation to the starry universe, so pointless in its relation to man, wonders why, for millions of years, the seasons' work has been remorselessly performed in the unseen fastnesses. He reels mentally at the stupendousness of the Mystery.

If he be humble he recoils with mortification at the audacity of the ancients who formulated a Deity in the Image of Man, and set Him up with the assertion that Man was made in the Image of God.

Pestilence might wipe man from the face of the earth: the trees would go on; they would spring up in the ruined cities; the hill-tops would be bare and the wastes would still be wastes, according to the laws of trees and soils; but the jungle activity would proceed, heedless of the temporary diversions engineered by humanity.

Is the power of thought and feeling, of which mere man is so vaingloriously proud, either greater than, or provedly superior to the instincts of a tree, which, germinated in the womb of the earth, suckled by the clouds, and nurtured by the eternal sun, rises and falls within a greater, grander span of conscious existence than is allowed to mortal man?

It has been said by an authority that an oak tree of forty-five feet in girth cannot well be less than fifteen hundred years old—at which age it still drops fertile acorns. And there are cedars in Lebanon thousands of years old. What gigantic cycles of Life are here suggested!

No wonder that man, in his swollen-headed egoism, and frantic desire to believe that he outshines all the other works of Nature, yearns for a future existence, and translates "I desire" into "I believe," and "I believe" into "I know"; and defends "I know" with the excuse that Instinct is Revelation. If so, then

go ye to the woods—as did the earliest men—and worship in groves where the true God is abundantly and magnificently manifest, for there Instinct is supreme.

It matters nothing that Trees have no Conscious Existence, no Thought, nor Creative power. These are purely human trivialities. Is an Idea more definite than a cubic foot of timber? Can it add one granule to the total sum of Matter? By what standard can the egoist measure the relative values of ideas and facts?

"Ah, but a tree has no soul," say the self-chosen Elect of the universe.

Why? Because its Instincts run on lines which are as impossible to man as man's are to the tree? Yet judged by man's only measure of excellence, the standard of Achievement, it outlives, outshines, outdistances him. In the great whirling cycles of Force does a man in his threescore-and-ten years gather to himself more of the Divine Power in his little orbit than the cedars of Lebanon in five thousand?

These thoughts are food for humility.

And since "nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so," the same might be said of great and small, long and short, animate or inanimate, conscious and unconscious. Which brings us round to the old assertion that nothing *is* but Thought.

There is the old oak tree in the mossy glade, contentedly existing, dropping acorns by the thousand.

"In a forest I know is an old oak. Its bark is wreathed in folds and reticulated like the wrinkles of an aged peasant's face"

Arnold White

Below an ancient peasant woman is sweeping up the food of swine. She sighs wearily, for her limbs are stiff. Sadness is her portion; poverty the reward of all her virtue. She will live on in pain, and shortly die.

Heigho! the oak seems to be having the best of it.

. . . . . .

The Sherwood Forest of our day is practically that portion adjoining the village of Edwinstowe, a station on the Great Central Railway. The place in winter is a sleepy hollow; yet not sleepy, for the wind denies it peace, and in the summer the excursionists arouse it from torpor. The visitors, including a large number of Americans, come from the north, the south, and from the labour centres of the Midlands, to do the traditional round trip of the Dukeries.

Edwinstowe itself is really a charming place, where the people are truly British. Indeed there is a touch of Old England about the peasants, a refinement in the common people, a gentler and slower speech, tinged with the soft Midland burr, and an old-world pride of home and love of cleanliness more frequent in Holland than in rural England of to-day. There is a well-washed, well-scrubbed air about everything; and the dames are none too well favoured; nay, they have even a touch of the dour, which is universal where women are housewives from dawn till sunset, and seven days a week.

In Edwinstowe there are families of peasants who trace their lineage back hundreds of years; and sturdy men they are, broad-shouldered and bearded, with

dominant nose and well-squared chest, who might have stepped out of the old pictures of Sherwood's Merrie Men. Give them green tunics and long bows and the Forest would be itself again.

About sixty years ago a writer describing Edwinstowe says: "In the village the very houses still remain where the huntsmen trained up the hounds which years ago chased the sleek deer in Birkland days. They are now converted into a couple of cottages, the dormer windows peep out of their low roofs, and lettuce, and marigolds, and wild-flowers bloom within their two-yard-wide gardens in front of them; and apricots ripen on the old grey walls. Only one generation has passed since the last huntsman was consigned to his clay upon the hill hard by. The road leading to these cottages is still called Dog Kennel Lane."

There is one fine old tree, some say the finest, named after a quite humble native, the Simon Foster Oak. It grows from the base with a twist like a spiral column. Formerly the inhabitants had certain privileges similar to those of the New Forest. They were allowed to gather firewood, to cart bracken and burn it, selling the produce to the alkali manufacturers; also privileges of mast; and at certain seasons an Edwinstowe man, while availing himself of these privileges, was accustomed to secure his stock during the night under this tree; and from that time it has borne his name. It is now two hundred years since Simon Foster's death; his gravestone may be seen in Edwinstowe churchyard, and numbers of his descendants are still living in the village.

One of his grandsons, Reuben Trueman, who died at Edwinstowe about fifty years ago, was a clever naturalist, whose collection of entomological specimens was purchased by the British Museum.

From Edwinstowe through the Dukeries the humble hired fly may go everywhere on certain days (motors are barred), and the drivers will show visitors many portions of the Forest which are not accessible without passing the ducal barriers. But the Forest proper is easily explored on foot.

The main street of Edwinstowe ends half a mile from the station in open land, and the Forest begins on the borders of the churchyard. There is first a scant fringe of pines, which soon gives place to giant oaks, well-spaced and interspersed with graceful birches. The woodland owes its charm largely to the contrast between these grim, rusty, metallic brown immovable oaks, and the fairy-like stems of the frivolous, swaying birches, playthings of every passing breeze. The birches are particularly fine and beautiful here.

Half a mile of wandering brings you to the Major Oak; and if the day be hot and drowsy you will find the keeper of the tree dozing below its outstretched arms. He is its guardian, a bearded father, stalwart though aged, and venerable like his noble charge. A retainer of the public-spirited Earl Manvers, his sole duty is to safeguard the oak, listen to its creakings, watch its supporting chains, and warn off the hilarious tripper.

In his solitary moments the hours are dull, and the proud-stepping cock pheasants, gleaming like burnished

copper in the sun, take pity on him, and finding him rooted like the tree, come to feed out of his hand. A wandering photographer once snap-shotted him with his pet pheasant, and made a picture post card of it, out of which—as the old fellow avers—"many a pound was made."

The Earl has cherished this noble tree, thatched its gaping wounds with zinc, supported its palsied limbs with giant chains (over which the bark has closed like flesh over manacles), and the restorer has even tinted a few bare brown parts with a pleasant mossy green paint.

Oh, shade of Robin Hood! How are the mighty fallen when doddards of the wilderness in their senility take to tinting!

If Robin roamed the glades of Sherwood in the twelfth century, as an early Latin poem avers, he doubtless rested beneath this very oak; but most of the others, now frowning in the glade, must have been at that time blithesome twigs.

The age of the Major Oak is estimated at a thousand to fifteen hundred years. The others have seen seven hundred at least. They are fairly grown and tall, branching high, suggesting an infancy in a close-packed thicket which forced them up to the light for many years before they were free to spread their arms to the sky.

To realize the full beauty of harmonious line and tracery of bough and bud, especially of the oak, we must wait for one of those rare and wonderful days in

SHERWOOD FOREST—THE MAJOR OAK AND ITS KEEPER

winter when frost comes suddenly, accompanied or preceded by white fog. The moisture deposited in its drift across the woodland freezes little by little, until every twig and giant bough is enlaced with crystal rime. Even then the wonder of it all is not revealed until the fog clears and the sun shines forth on a wood spangled with frozen dewdrops. Millions of diamond-studded boughs gleam in the haze, with waves of colour breaking over their clear crystals when the sun-shafts pierce the gauzy mists.

We see oaks amazingly like coral in formation, the boles assume unfamiliar lines, each twig and bough is sharply defined among a million others; all the wonderful unity of purpose and harmony of direction towards the light is plainly revealed. Robbed of colour distraction, simplified to a single medium of white set against a background of white—or rather of purple-grey—we see in all its beauty the harmonious relation of twig to bough, of bush to tree, of the sapling to the aged veteran.

Leaves have no part in this. It is a line engraving printed in white upon grey. It follows the diversified lines of interweaving pattern upon which all "composition" in art is based, whether in painting or music.

It provides an ecstasy of visual delight! It holds you as irresistibly as the gaudy spring. The clod, the dullard, the half-frozen outcast raises his eyes in adoration. It is a manifestation of the all-effective Omniscience—of God working miracles of wonderment in lavish abandon, creating trillions of diamonds with an icy

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LIBRARY NOTTINGHAM

breath, and dismissing them as easily by a gleam of watery sun.

The heavens clear; the sun shines full and strong. Now the diamonds fall. So swift is the transformation from fairyland that it seems to have all been a delusion. Patter, patter, drip the icicles; star-forms, shell-forms, leaf-forms, geometric jewel-shapes drop among the dead leaves and fade to water. All gone in twenty minutes. The wood of crystals is a wood of trees once more.

A gentle fall of snow will sometimes produce a similar scene; but it is as cottonwool to diamonds. No painter has ever succeeded in entirely capturing the effect of enshrouding hoar-frost; no camera with its microscopic power of reproducing points of light has recorded anything to parallel even the suggestive brush effects of the painters. It is only in the mind that the fairy fantasia is played.

Ecstasy is produced by the countless points of sunlight mirrored in the facets of the frosted diamonds. Mind cannot grasp their number, for numerical calculation is only an expression of human littleness. Nature knows not Number, Distance, Time; purely human sensations, they belong to the world of delusions in which we live.

The eternal processes of the clouds and the trees, which shed their constituent parts to feed their roots, and in due course appear once more as nuts and seeds that multiply, and so repeat the eternal round, suggest a cycle of Force and Idea in Nature harmonious with the spherical rotating globe, and the planets in their orbits.

HOAR FROST IN THE WOOD

Cycles without beginning or end! The snowflakes return to the ocean, and thence to the skies, and back to the trees and the brooks. Only man has conceived the fanciful idea of an End, a delusion of the flesh of which Nature takes no cognizance.

The character of Sherwood has undoubtedly altered latterly, even since Scott's days. The coppice and holly have vanished; there are spacious intervals between the trees suggesting the handiwork of the forestry expert; and where holly flourishes it has grown into tall trees.

The deer do not wander there now, but in other portions of the woodland, included in the neighbouring estates of Welbeck and Clumber, they are to be seen in large herds. An inquiry of a native concerning local sources of information anent Robin Hood provoked the following rather quaint colloquy :—

"Are there any old books about these parts?" I asked, forgetting that in the local dialect the vowels are long drawn.

"Old bookes? Ay, an' staags as well, plenty on 'em over there at Welbeck," was the rustic's reply.

Perhaps Robin himself called a buck a "booke" and a stag a "staag."

The perambulating forges which once infested the forest, cutting down timber to feed the furnaces, have long ceased their labours; but at Creswell Crags, cheek by jowl with the caves of Robin Hood, there now rises the chimney of a colliery. The sunlight which glints upon the ancient water-way also falls upon the distant

slate roofs of the colliers' cottages. But they do not intrude aggressively yet awhile. The gorge is still a place to dream in. But avoid the Crags upon the Sabbath; for then the youth of the colliery district wander abroad, clad in Sunday best, with the accompanying habit of facetiousness, which seems to be a part of the Sabbath outfit of the "yahoo" all the world over. Their mirth is no doubt harmless; but one is inclined to cynically remark of the colliery fraternity generally, in holiday mood, that they are better under ground.

BRITISH OAKS, SHERWOOD

"Houses and ships, cities and navies are built with it, and there is a kind of it so tough, and extremely compact that our sharpest tools will hardly enter it, and scarcely the very fire itself"

Evelyn

CHAPTER VII

ROBIN HOOD

"Lythe and lysten gentylmen
That be of freebore bloode,
I shall you tell of a good yeman,
His name was Robyn Hode."

Old Ballad

THE best traditions of Robin Hood—apart from the old ballads, which are better known to the antiquarian than to the general reader—have been dealt with so picturesquely by Scott in *Ivanhoe* that it would be presumption, without an orgy of later scholarly research, to attempt to visualize the scenes in Sherwood Forest which he treated so romantically. And as *Ivanhoe* is only a pleasant memory to most of us, the following fragment "on this present matter" may serve to recall some of its charm.

The scene is Sherwood Forest—its topography rather wide of the mark, but, as its boundaries were vague, let that pass. The scene chosen is that after the sack and burning of Front de Bœuf's castle by the victorious outlaws who rescued the Lady Rowena from captivity and ravishment by De Bracy. Robin Hood is referred to as Locksley.

"The daylight had dawned upon the glades of the oak forest. The green boughs glittered with all their pearls of dew. The hind led her fawn from the covert of high fern to the more open walks of the greenwood; and no huntsman was there to watch or intercept the stately hart, as he paced at the head of the antlered herd.

"The outlaws were all assembled around the Trysting-tree in the Harthill Walk, where they had spent the night in refreshing themselves after the fatigues of the siege, some with wine, some with slumber, many with hearing and recounting the events of the day, and computing the heaps of plunder which their success had placed at the disposal of their chief.

"The spoils were indeed very large; for, notwithstanding that much was consumed, a great deal of plate, rich armour, and splendid clothing had been secured by the exertions of the dauntless outlaws, who could be appalled by no danger when such rewards were in view. Yet so strict were the laws of their society, that no one ventured to appropriate any part of the booty, which was brought into one common mass to be at the disposal of their leader.

"The place of rendezvous was an aged oak; not, however, the same to which Locksley had conducted Gurth and Wamba in the earlier part of the story, but one which was the centre of a sylvan amphitheatre, within half a mile of the demolished castle of Torquilstone. Here Locksley assumed his seat—a throne of turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak—

and the sylvan followers were gathered around him. He assigned to the Black Knight a seat at his right hand, and to Cedric a place upon his left. . . .

"The tramp of horses was now heard, and the Lady Rowena appeared, surrounded by several riders, and a much stronger party of foot-men, who joyfully shook their pikes and clashed their brown-bills for joy of her freedom. She herself, richly attired, and mounted on a dark chestnut palfrey, had recovered all the dignity of her manner, and only an unwonted degree of paleness showed the sufferings she had undergone. Her lovely brow, though sorrowful, bore on it a cast of reviving hope for the future, as well as of grateful thankfulness for the past deliverance.—She knew that Ivanhoe was safe, and she knew that Athelstane was dead. . . .

"As Rowena bent her steed towards Locksley's seat, that bold yeoman, with all his followers, rose to receive her, as if by general instinct of courtesy. The blood rose to her cheeks, as, courteously waving her hand, and bending so low that her beautiful and loose tresses were for an instant mixed with the flowing mane of her palfrey, she expressed in few but apt words her obligations and her gratitude to Locksley and her other deliverers.—'God bless you, brave men,' she concluded, 'God and Our Lady bless you and requite you for gallantly perilling yourselves in the cause of the oppressed!—If any of you should hunger, remember Rowena has food—if you should thirst, she has many a butt of wine and brown ale—and if the Normans drive ye from these walks, Rowena has forests of her own,

where her gallant deliverers may range at full freedom, and never ranger ask whose arrow has struck down the deer.'

"'Thanks, gentle lady,' said Locksley; 'thanks from my company and myself. But to have saved you requites itself. We who walk the greenwood do many a wild deed, and the Lady Rowena's deliverance may be received as an atonement.'

"Again bowing from her palfrey, Rowena turned to depart; but pausing a moment, while Cedric, who was to attend her, was also taking his leave, she found herself unexpectedly close by the prisoner De Bracy. He stood under a tree in deep meditation, his arms crossed upon his breast, and Rowena was in hopes that she might pass him unobserved. He looked up, however, and, when aware of her presence, a deep flush of shame suffused his handsome countenance. He stood a moment most irresolute; then, stepping forward, took her palfrey by the rein, and bent his knee before her.

"'Will the Lady Rowena deign to cast an eye on a captive knight—on a dishonoured soldier?'

"'Sir Knight,' answered Rowena, 'in enterprises such as yours, the real dishonour lies not in failure, but in success.'

"'Conquest, lady, should soften the heart,' answered De Bracy; 'let me but know that the Lady Rowena forgives the violence occasioned by an ill-fated passion, and she shall soon learn that De Bracy knows how to serve her in nobler ways.'

"THE STAG AT EVE"

"'I forgive you, Sir Knight,' said Rowena, 'as a Christian.'

"'That means,' said Wamba (the jester), 'that she does not forgive him at all.'

"'But I can never forgive the misery and desolation your madness has occasioned,' continued Rowena.

"'Unloose your hold on the lady's rein,' said Cedric, coming up. 'By the bright sun above us, but it were shame, I would pin thee to the earth with my javelin.—But be well assured, thou shalt smart, Maurice De Bracy, for thy share in this foul deed.'

"'He threatens safely who threatens a prisoner,' said De Bracy; 'but when had a Saxon any touch of courtesy?'

"Then, retiring two steps backward, he permitted the lady to move on."

No wonder that painters have seized upon this fine scene in a noble setting. When we know Sherwood, with its patriarchal oaks and greensward, it is easy to people it with Scott's figures, the prisoner De Bracy in coat of mail, Rowena with her shower of golden tresses, the green tunic bowmen of Robin Hood, Wamba the Jester, Friar Tuck, the Black Knight, and the rest of them.

It smacks of profanity to inquire historically into facts and dates, and examine and compare the ancient ballads of Robin Hood, the only data available, with purely historical records. As for the presence of King Richard at Sherwood, as described in *Ivanhoe*, he certainly did visit it—but not as a wandering knight.

It is stated in an old chronicle that when Richard, after his return from the Holy Land, had brought to subjection his rebellious subjects in the castles of Tickhill and Nottingham: "on the next day, being the 29th of March, he proceeded to Clipstone (the Royal Hunting Lodge of John) and the Forest of Sherwood, *which he had never before seen*, and they pleased him much."

Among those who have written on the subject of Robin Hood there is one, the Rev. J. Hunter, F.S.A., the historian who in 1852 published among a series of Critical and Historical Tracts, one entitled *The Great Hero of the Ancient Minstrelsy of England, Robin Hood:* his period, real character, etc,—investigated and perhaps ascertained."

Hunter's theory is that Robin Hood is neither a mere poetical conception, a beautiful abstraction of the life of a jovial freebooter living in the woods, nor a Saxon struggling against the Norman power in the first and second reigns of the House of Anjou, nor one of the Exheredati of the reign of King Henry III; but one of the Contrariantes of the reign of Edward II, and living in the early years of the Third; but whose birth is to be carried back into the reign of Edward I and fixed in a decennary period 1285 to 1295; that he was born of a family of some station in Wakefield, and a supporter of the Earl of Lancaster. When the Earl fell there was a dreadful proscription, and a few persons who had been in arms not only escaped the hazard of battle but the arm of the executioner; that he was one of these: and

that he protected himself against the authorities of the times partly in the depths of the woods of Barnsdale or of the Forest of Sherwood, intimidating the public officers by the opinion which was abroad of his unerring bow and his instant command of assistance from numerous comrades as skilled in archery as himself. That he laid it down as a principle that he would take from none but those who could afford to lose; that he continued this course for about twenty months, April 1322 to December 1323, meeting with various adventures, falling into the Royal power when in 1323 the King was intent upon freeing his forests from marauders.

And here it must be stated that the name is not found in authentic contemporary chronicles; he lives only as a hero of song.

Three simple ballads are found in MSS. which cannot be later than the fourteenth century. "The Tale of Robin Hood and the Monk," "Robin Hood and the Potter," "Robin and Gandelyn." Also the poem printed by Wynkyn de Worde in or about 1495: "The lytell Geste of Robyn Hood," a kind of life of him, or rather a small collection of ballads strung together.

Hunter states that Robin was received into the Royal service at a little before Christmas 1323, and in documents preserved in the Exchequer he had found the name of Robyn Hode, not once but several times, occurring as receiving, with about eight and twenty others, the pay of threepence a day as one of the Vadlets porteurs de la Chambre of the King.

We see, then, that this person called Robyn Hode,

whoever he was, was in full service of the King from the 24th of March in the year following that when the King, after being in Lancashire, spent five or six weeks in and about Nottingham, leaving the neighbourhood a little before Christmas.

The name continues to be found in the *Journal of the Chamber* as receiving wages until 22nd of November. But, according to the ballad, he soon found his revenues wasting away, and had not at Court the means to replenish his exchequer which a lonely highway through a forest afforded him, so took to the woods again.

It seems well to have put on record Hunter's surmises as to the identity of Robin Hood and the exact period when he flourished. But the wisest scholars of the last half-century are unanimous in rejecting his conclusions. Hood was in mediæval days, as now, quite a common name, and the hero of romance most probably flourished in the days of Richard I.

. . . . . .

Either the forests of Britain have lost their primeval ferocity of bramble and thicket or the mind of man has undergone a change; for who feels horror in a lonesome wood now? The decay of superstitious fear has, perhaps, given men generally increased stability of reason, and the extinction of jungle beasts adds to our mental repose; yet among the ancients it was considered natural for a man "to feel an awful and religious terror in the centre of a thick wood," on which account darksome groves were very generally chosen for religious ceremonies. Sublime solitudes and towering grandeur were

TALL TREES, SHERWOOD

alike distasteful to man until far into the eighteenth century.

> "All pale with sacred horror, they surveyed
> The solemn mountains and the reverend shade."

So much were people given to this "devilish and unnatural blindness" as to offer human sacrifices, not to the tree gods only, but to the trees themselves as real gods. Hence the heathen chapels bore the name of Fana, and from their wild and extravagant religion the professors of it were called "Fanaticks."

And as there was hardly a grove without its temple, so almost every temple had a grove belonging to it where they placed idols, altars, and lights.

I quote from John Evelyn, that loyal subject of King Charles II, who, in his *Discourse of Forest Trees*, quaintly talks of the supposed effect of trees upon the mind.

"Here we may not omit what learned men have observed concerning the custom of Prophets, and persons inspired of old to sleep on the boughs of trees . . . on mattresses and beds made of their leaves, *ad consulendum*, to ask advice of God. Naturalists tell us that the Laurus and Agnus Castus were trees which greatly composed the fancy, and did facilitate true visions; and that the first were especially efficacious to inspire poetical fury. . . .

> "'. . . The muse herself enjoys
> Best in the woods: Verse flies the cities' noise.'

"And in the walks and shades of trees, the noblest

raptures have been conceived, and poets have composed verses which have animated men to heroic and glorious actions: Here orators have made their panegyricks, Historians grave relations, and profound philosophers have loved here to pass their lives in repose and contemplation. . . .

"It was under an oak, growing in the Park of St. Vincent, near Paris, that St. Louis was used to hear complaints, determine causes, and do justice to such as resorted hither. And we read of a solemn treaty of peace held under a flourishing Elm between Gisors and Trèves, which was afterwards felled by the French King Philip in a rage against King Henry II for not agreeing to it. Nay, they have sometimes been known to crown their Kings under a goodly tree, or in some venerable Grove."

We have many oaks in England with similar kingly traditions. Sherwood boasts one, known as Parliament Oak (a mere fragment now), under which King John is said to have assembled his barons after a revolt in Wales, and decreed the execution of the young Welsh hostages.

Other authorities declare that Edward I held a Parliament here in 1290; and that the age of the tree is between a thousand and fifteen hundred years; but it is cleft in twain, and almost gone—quite unimpressive in comparison with its elaborate protection of railings. It stands upon the road between Ollerton and Mansfield, about a mile from Clipstone, and is scarcely worth a pilgrimage. There is practically no tree

left to view, and the spot is undistinguished in every way.

Unless there is any record of the assembly of Edward's Parliament written before Stuart times, it is much more likely that the tree received its name of Parliament Oak during the civil wars, when the parliamentary forces were in the neighbourhood.

We know how great a part the oak played in the Stuart fortunes, and how many trees the monarchs favoured in their distress in widely separated localities. So much so that it has become a jest; and when a wag spies an ancient oak, no matter where, he exclaims "What a fine tree! Surely King Charles hid here."

While on the topic of Charles it is impossible to refrain from again quoting at length the loquacious Evelyn on the loyalty of the oak. After enumerating sundry references to the oak in classical authors, the obsequious courtier of Charles II with delicious naïveté recounts one especial virtue of the king of trees—that of dutiful allegiance to the divine person of the restored Stuart King.

"We must never forget," he says, "that wonderful providence which saved the forlorn and persecuted prince (Charles) after his defeat at Worcester under the shelter of this auspicious and hospitable tree when"—and then he quotes—

> ". . . all the counties fill'd
> With enemies' troops, in every house and Grove
> His sacred head is at a value held,
> They seek, and near, how very near they move.

What should they do? They from the danger take
Rash, hasty counsel; yet, from heav'n inspir'd,
A spacious Oak he did his Palace make,
And safely in its hollow womb retir'd.

The royal Tree its willing boughs inclin'd
Well to receive the climbing Royal Guest
(In Trees more pity than in man we find)
And its thick leaves into an arbour press'd.

A rugged seat of wood became a Throne,
Th' obsequious Boughs his Canopy of State;
With bowing Tops the Tree their King did own,
And silently ador'd him as he sate."

The silent adoration is beautiful, but quite in the fashion of the time. Apparently the tree considered itself fortunate in securing so favourable an opportunity of adding to the oak's long list of services to man.

And what friendly virtue there is in the oak according to the same delightful chronicler. Here is his category, displaying much wisdom and knowledge of ancient lore—with not a little of that simple credulity which characterized his era. First he deals with the acorns:—

"Cato advises the husbandman to reserve two hundred and forty bushels of acorns for his oxen, mingled with a like quantity of beans and lupins, and to drench them well. But, in truth, they are more popular for swine, and, being so made small, will fatten pigeons, peacocks, turkeys, pheasants, and poultry; nay, it is reported that some fishes feed on them, especially the tunny, in such places of the coast where trees hang over arms of the sea. Acorns, before the use of wheat corn was found out, were heretofore the food of

WHERE ROBIN HOOD ROAMED

men, nay, of Jupiter himself. . . . And even in the time of the Romans, the custom was, in Spain, to make a second service of acorns and mast, as the French now do of marrons and chestnuts. . . . Oaks bear also a knur, full of a cottony matter, of which they anciently made wicks for their lamps and candles; and among the *Selectoria Remedia* of *Prævotius*, there is mention of an oil *é querna glande* chemically extracted, which he affirms to be of the longest continuance the least consumptive of any other whatever for such light. The ingenious author of the *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* tells us that, upon his own experience, a rod of Oak, of four, five, six or eight inches about, being twisted like a wyth, boiled in wort, causes it to ferment, and procures yeast. The rod should be cut before midday, and is frequently used in this manner to furnish yeast, and, being preserved, will serve, and produce the same effect many years together; and, as the historian affirms, he was shown a piece of thick wyth which had been kept for making ale for twenty years. In the meantime the leaves of Oaks abundantly congested on snow, preserve it as well, for wine, as a deep pit, or the most artificial refrigeratory. Nor must we pass by the sweet mildews, so much more copiously found on this tree than any other, whence the industrious bees gather such abundance of honey, as that, instead of carrying to their hives, they glut themselves to death: but, from this ill report, hastily taken up by Euricius Cordus, our learned Mr. Ray has vindicated this temperate and abstemious useful creature. Varro

affirms that they made salt of oak ashes, with which they sometimes seasoned meat, but more frequently made use of to sprinkle among, and fertilize, their seed-corn; which reminds me of a certain Oak found buried somewhere in Transylvania near the salt pits, that was entirely converted into an hard salt when they came to examine it by cutting. . . . No less strange is that which some report of certain water somewhere in Hungary, which transmutes the leaves of this tree into brass, and iron into copper. Of the galls is made trial of spaw-water, and the ground and basis of several dyes, especially sadder colours, and are a great revenue to those who have quantities of them. Nor must I forget ink composed of galls, copperas, gum arabic; beat the galls grossly, and put them into a quart of claret or French wine, and let them soak for eight or nine days. . . . There are a world of receipts more, of which see Caneparius de *Atramentis*. Of the very moss of the Oak, that which is white composes the choicest cypress-powder, which is esteemed good for the head; but impostors familiarly vend other mosses under that name, as they do the fungi (excellent in hemorrhages and fluxes) for the true agaric, to the scandal of Physic. Young red oaken leaves, decocted in wine, make an excellent gargle for a sore mouth; and almost every part of this tree is sovereign against fluxes in general, and when astringents are proper. The liquor issuing out between the bark, which looks like treacle, has many sovereign virtues. . . . The coals of oak, beaten and mingled with honey, cure the carbuncle. . . . It is reported that the

very shade of this tree is wholesome; that the sleeping, or lying under it, becomes a present remedy to paralytics, and recovers those whom the mistaken malign influence of the Walnut-tree has smitten. But what is still more strange, I read in one Paulus, a physician of Denmark, that a handful or two of small Oak buttons, mingled with oats, and given to horses which are black, will, in a few days' eating, alter their colour to a fine dapple grey."

So much for ancient lore. We have progressed somewhat in two hundred years; and the oaks of Sherwood are not much in demand for curative purposes nowadays.

Weird, mysterious, dark and unexpected fissures present themselves in the mighty trunks of what, at first sight, seem to be solid trees. One almost suspects movement within, grinning satyrs, or wood nymphs ready to emerge. One appreciates the romantic fancy of the superstitious ancients, who held that every tree included a tutelar genius or nymph living and dying with it.

> "A lab'ring oak a sudden cleft disclosed,
> And from its bark a living birth exposed,
> Where (passing all belief) in strange array
> A lovely damsel issued to the day."

In looking at the denuded tops of Sherwood's monsters, many of which seem to have been beheaded at about the same time, one wonders if these are the trees that suffered in the great hurricane of 1703, to which Evelyn so feelingly referred when

he talked of the snapping of aged Oaks "giving a crack like thunder," and being heard at many miles distant.

"Methinks I still hear," he says, "sure I am that I still feel the dismal groans of our forests when that late dreadful hurricane (happening on the 26th Nov. 1703) felled so many thousands of goodly oaks, prostrating the trees, laying them in ghastly postures, like whole regiments fallen in battle by the sword of the conqueror and crushing all that grew beneath them. Such was the prospect of many miles in several places. . . . The losses are dreadful; stories of this ruin were indeed great. . . . The public accounts reckoned no less than 3000 brave Oaks in one part only of the Forest of Dean blown down. In the New Forest in Hampshire about 4000, and in about 450 parks and groves from 20 large trees to 1000 of excellent timber without counting orchard trees."

The impetus given to the planting of trees by Evelyn's learned work *Sylva*, especially the raising of Oaks for the Navy, was so great that, in a later edition, edited by A. Hunter, M.D., F.R.S., in 1776, it was declared that, owing to the publication of the book, "The spirit for planting increased to a high degree: and there is reason to believe that many of our ships which, in the last war, gave laws to the whole world, were constructed from Oaks planted at that time." But the lords of the Admiralty no longer trouble their heads about Sherwood.

The Duke of Portland at Welbeck in 1776 appears

SHERWOOD OAKS

to have been a most active forester, and it is doubtless due to him and his descendants that the Dukeries at the present time retain so much of their original forest character. For the Greendale Oak, still the pride of the neighbourhood, was as famous and as cherished a hundred and fifty years ago as to-day. It was then, and is still, one of the sights of the countryside. It was spoken of by Mr. Speechly, gardener to the Duke in 1775, as "still living" in a letter to Hunter. And it lingers yet. He refers to "that remarkable tree called the Green Dale Oak (from its growing in a valley of that name near Welbeck), which in the year 1724 had a hole cut through its body large enough to admit a coach to go through. This great curiosity is yet living, and frequently bears acorns, which we carefully save, to be distributed as presents amongst his Grace's acquaintances.

"I may omit describing to you the present state of this piece of antiquity, as I have herewith enclosed a drawing of it taken on the spot a few days ago, from which you will see, notwithstanding the uncommon size of the lower part of the tree, it never contained any great quantity of timber; I mean in comparison with several of our largest oaks, some of which contain in their tower-like trunks between seven and eight hundred solid feet of timber, exclusive of their stately tops: some of their large branches are even like trees themselves."

The other great show tree of the Dukeries, the Major Oak (or, as the new notice-board describes it, the

Queen Oak), is supposed to have derived its name from a certain Major Rooke, a noted antiquarian who resided in the neighbourhood a century or so ago, and took a great interest in Sherwood. He it was who discovered the brand of King John, about eighteen inches below the bark of one of the giants of the forest. He also found the marks of King James, and William and Mary. This oak was known to be a particular favourite of the Major, and it is assumed by a local historian that the name "Major Oak" was a natural transition. The Major, who died in 1780, remembered one continuous wood from Mansfield to Nottingham; so that it is only about two hundred years since the great forest of Robin Hood disappeared.

Tennyson is supposed to refer to this tree in "Robin Hood" when he speaks of: "That oak where twelve can stand inside, nor touch each other." If so, the poet's licence of exaggeration must be generously allowed. It is hardly large enough for that; though eighteen men have been packed within like sardines, and they bulged through the opening so far that the last man saw nothing of the inside.

The whole story of Sherwood and the Dukeries has been excellently told by Mr. Joseph Rodgers in his recent book *The Scenery of Sherwood Forest*, where the claims of Robin Hood to be considered a reality are more exhaustively treated than is possible here. The work, to which the writer is indebted, is a large one, and illustrated by some very faithful pictures. It bears evidence of loving and authoritative research, is full

of interest, and concludes with the following lines of Keats:—

"All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his tufted grave,
And if Marion should live
Out again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze;
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fallen beneath the dock-yard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—stranger! that honey
Can't be got without hard money!
So it is: yet let us sing
Honour to the old bow-string!
Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to tight Little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to bold Robin Hood
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to Maid Marion,
And to all the Sherwood clan!"

III. THE NEW FOREST

CHAPTER VIII

A REAL FOREST OF THE CROWN

"Away! our journey lies through dell and dingle,
Where the blithe fawn trips by its timid mother,
Where the broad oak, with intercepting boughs,
Chequers the sunbeam in the greensward alley—
Up and away!—for lovely paths are these."

Ettrick Forest

THE New Forest is the place where they have the straightest roads and the longest miles in England. The miles are of statute length it is true, but seem longer, because they can be seen down long vanishing vistas between rolling banks of much more inviting green trees. The roads, bordered by soft green turf on either side, are good, but flinty and dusty; and on high days and holidays a continuous procession of motors tear through, churning sand and chalk, and hooting, trumpeting, or whistling, according to the owners' fancy in wailers. Yet along the selfsame arrow-straight highways (obviously the work of the Romans) William and Rufus with their jingling cavalcade clattered and galloped, with bowmen, falconers, and spearmen.

A TYPICAL NEW FOREST ROAD

Southerners by blood, they loved the balmy air of the forests of Anderida, freshened by the salt breeze of the Solent.

But once off the highway, sylvan calm and royal dignity enfold you. The aisles are lofty and solemn under the grandest of beeches and most venerable oaks. Here and there the trees are tired, and bowed low, uneasy at their roots, or dipping towards water. The thicket, never quite impenetrable, and always darker in seeming than in reality, is often brave with bloom, and sickly with the scent of the imprisoned breaths of the loaded hawthorn. Below is the glinting green of the fresh-leaved whortleberry, with its pendent and prim bloom ; the languid stretch of the honeysuckle, as it creeps towards the light ; the dead white of the wood sorrel, with its rare green ground of leaves ; the ripple of the blue hyacinth ; the spurge, greedily catching all the high lights with its green petals ; and the dog violet, unostentatious and shy, as though ashamed of being perfumeless.

So much has been written about the New Forest, and so well, that it is unnecessary to enter into any elaborate details of a topographical character. The district has long been a holiday resort on its own account, and touching, as it does, a number of watering-places and populous centres, naturally draws thousands of visitors in a year. Yet there are many, especially in the north, who know it only by name, and regard it as a small and straggling tract of woodland in the county of Hampshire, boasting the name of forest without any real claim to the distinction.

As a matter of fact, the Forest comprises sixty thousand acres. Civilization and agriculture have made inroads into the original area; but the ancient Royal hunting-ground, ceded by Queen Victoria to the Nation, in return for certain fixed emoluments, remains at the present day a forest in every sense of the word, a haunt of wild deer, a common and chase, and a wooded tract, more thickly covered with trees now than, perhaps, at any time in its history.

It is in reality a great common, with enclosures set apart by the rangers for pure forestry and the raising of trees for revenue, to which the public have access, besides great stretches of wild woodland and thicket. It provides a double object-lesson, and demonstrates the difference between the old style of primeval growth and natural decay, and the modern scientific culture of wood for commerce. The new plantations are principally conifers, and have no doubt much altered the rolling character of the scenery, but they give variety; and in some instances the plantations clothe ground which was hitherto wild and barren heath, deserted by man and beast.

The visitors to the New Forest gather mostly in the summer. In the spring they fear the cutting winds; and in the glorious autumn run away ere the wonderful transformation begins. The summer is the least attractive to the Nature student. Autumn is the time *par excellence* to seek the shelter of the groves and watch the pageant of the changing leaves.

Slowly the vanguard of golden heralds makes its

appearance, advancing in wide formation. Here and there, amid the mass of summer green, isolated tree-tops are gilded as by vagrant shafts of sunlight. Then the edges of the forest billows show a tinted line, and the serried masses disentangle themselves according to the preponderance of particular varieties grouped together on different soils.

The north wind whispers through the hedgerows; and only in the shelter of the forest is there calm. Here the natural processes of decay and regeneration go on in dignity and silence.

> "The pine tree drops its dead,
> They are quiet as under the sea;
> Overhead, overhead
> Rushes life in a race,
> As the clouds, the clouds chase."

There is an order in the falling of the leaves. The lime is among the first. Next after the lime comes the wych elm; and the end of the first week in October sees the brown leaves of the sycamore fluttering earthward. The horse-chestnut now shows the nip of frosty nights, and next the cherry and the birch. By the middle of the month poplars are shedding; with the third week maple, walnut, beech, and aspen. By the end of the month the hardy elder is bereft of its foliage, and last of all the ash.

But, of course, this order is not arbitrary, and depends upon the frosts; nor do the trees necessarily strip with equal celerity. Many a tree will cling to its leaves long after their purpose is served. Young oaks and beeches

will hold their dead right through until the spring; while the Lucombe oak also keeps its leaves even when it has grown to a considerable size.

The blackberry holds its leaves long and late. How charmingly it trails, wreathed along the ground, or clambering into the security of lofty tree-boughs. Sometimes it roots itself high up in an ancient bole, and sends a cascade of vivid green earthwards to mingle with the leaf-strewn undergrowth. In many sheltered hollows it is to all intents an evergreen.

The clinging of leaves to the trees when all functional service is done is due to causes not generally explainable; though it is known why dead boughs hold their leaves when all the other branches have thrust theirs off. Leaves are the food-formers of a tree (by which it also breathes), and as soon as the autumn cold has checked their use it is most important that the tree should rid itself of them; for which process Nature has provided a neat and systematic method of expulsion.

When the leaf dies the sap is arrested. The first sign is the change of colour; not only the leaf, but each leaf-stalk suffers. Look to the base of the stalk, and there you will find a cushion which does not share the fate of the leaf, for while the latter dries the former remains plump and full of sap. The block takes place in this cushion. It cuts off the sap which all the summer long has been rising from the roots through the trunk to each individual leaf. A separating layer of cork is formed which ends by cutting through the tissues of the leaf-stalk, so that at the first gale the remaining fibres snap,

AUTUMN—GATHERING BRACKEN

and the leaf floats down to earth to continue the fateful cycle of its destiny.

How busily they fall, and how uncanny their rustling whispers when an autumn frost is suddenly succeeded by a generous, warming sun. The separating layer between the leaf-stalk and the twig has been turned to ice; this ice expands and forces the tissues apart, so that the leaves drop and drop, until the cold, still air is clouded by myriads of little tongues earthward bound, descending with the softness and persistence of snowflakes; twisting, circling, fluttering, remorselessly falling.

On a hard frosty morning in November I have seen a great beech tree, which has been silently reposing in a shadow, suddenly tremble and shiver. It rustles with a hundred little voices. The sun has reached it, hot and full.

The first leaves flutter down; many and few, irregularly at first—as if uncertain what to do—but never stopping.

The hot and glowing sun beats on. The tree is in labour, and weeps a leafy deluge. Hundreds, nay hundreds of thousands, of leaves fall in a steady, continuous rain, a golden cascade. Passers-by stop and watch; children run into the zone of the leaf-storm and in a few minutes are covered. For hours the beech tree weeps—until the sun creeps past and the shadow of a sympathetic oak tree veils the glare. A truce is called; the draggled, faded creature, shorn of nearly all her glory, is given a brief respite ere the coming of the final dusting of the gale.

Autumn never quite strips the New Forest bare; the conifers see to that; they cover very large areas. For the rest, the district bears much the same aspect as a thousand years ago. The big trees are fewer, no doubt; the finest oaks have gone to sail the seas and fight the battles of Drake, Frobisher, and Nelson.

Cattle and ponies roam at will, and the commoners retain their rights of pasturage like their ancestors, with increased security for their beasts, and no more irritating disturbance and blackmail from their overlords. The Hampshire hogs are not much in evidence, they fatten better at home; nor the wild boar, nor the wolves; but there still remain the "foules of the forest," the pheasant and the partridge, blackcock and woodcock.

The local breed of cattle, carrying their pleasant sounding bells, crop the scanty herbage, and thrive upon a diet that would be the death of more pampered beasts in other parts. "A well-bred cow would die, and several have died," says a local authority, "on what would fatten a forest cow, as experimentalists, some of whom lost numbers of valuable animals, could testify. Every cottager, if he has the right to turn out, gets a cow as soon as he possibly can."

The beautiful green lawns are quite a characteristic of the New Forest, generally spread out around some pond or stream, and have as a background a great circle of fine trees, or a fringe of little ones. Most are named according to their particular peculiarity; such as Yew Tree Bottom, Even Water Bottom, Withy Bed Bottom,

Two Bucks Bottom, Turf Hill Bottom, Woodford Bottom, Furze Lawn, Mill Lawn, Gutter Valley, Hampton Green, Black Bush Plain, and, the most beautiful of all, Balmer Lawn.

All the British species of deer are found in the Forest—red, fallow, and roe. They frequent Boldrewood and Knightwood, and the dense woods north of the Forest. Their food comprises nearly all green stuffs, and they particularly fancy the tops of holly, and sprays of ash and ivy; but are wasteful, and given to what in the neighbourhood is known as "maggoting," *i.e.* biting and leaving.

When they became a nuisance to neighbouring farmers, and the Deer Removal Act was passed in 1851, they were netted, shot, and hunted, and the desire was to exterminate them. Yet many remain, and they are said to be increasing. They are regularly hunted from October to May, and the sport brings a large number of visitors to Lyndhurst.

The wild ponies are very tame indeed; but, living in a practically wild state, are naturally extremely hardy, sturdy, and sure-footed. In the spring the foals of all colours and sizes are everywhere, lolling and lazing, and basking in the sun with almost comic abandon, or galloping in circles and "buck-jumping" with infantile fury. The ponies are not dainty in their choice of food, and it is said that in the winter, after stamping on the furze they eat it with seeming relish. Many are brought home by their owners in the cold season; and they are broken in when they

are from two to five years of age—and this is no easy task.

The district abounds with interest for the naturalist; for in the New Forest we are on the ground where Gilbert White lived and wrote his *Natural History of Selborne*, a work which everybody is supposed to have read—and which, it is to be feared, most leave at the supposition stage. But students of woodland life will know all about him, and find here a wide field for their labours, fully catalogued, and exhaustively written about in a variety of books.

Hampshire claims not only the largest remnants of the ancient Royal forests, but also the second greatest aggregate of woodlands in any county in England. Therefore it is the most interesting to the antiquary, the naturalist, and the lover of sylvan scenery.

Let us omit the deeply interesting geological details of beds and stratas of chalk, clay, and greensand, to those whom they concern, and set out from Lyndhurst, the accepted centre of present New Forest civilization, in search of what remains of the old hunting-ground of the Norman kings.

The tradition of William the Norman's ruthless destruction of churches and villages to make this pleasant area his Royal chase, which has for so long been a blood-stirring incident of British schoolbook history, must, alas! be dismissed as a myth, or at least an exaggeration. How we burned with true Saxon fury, like Pope, at the brutalities of the arrogant con-

NEW FOREST PONIES

querors who laid waste fair towns, and scattered fat abbots in the interests of a frivolous sport.

> ". . . A beast or subject slain
> Were equal crimes in a despotic reign:
> Both doom'd alike, for sportive tyrants bled;
> But while the subject starved, the beast was fed."

But investigation of the truth, alas! has destroyed one more picturesque tale of British tribulation and suffering.

It appears from recent investigations that the ancient game of making mountains out of molehills was as much in favour nine hundred years ago as in our present enlightened age—a typical Saxon characteristic, as old as an Englishman's love of a grievance.

The New Forest was a hunting-ground of the Saxon kings before the conquest, with forest laws rather lax and boundaries undefined. The inhabitants were as fond of the nimble deer as their masters, and here and there it was necessary to remove undesirables when the Normans, with their stricter notions of the prerogatives of the chase, established a keener supervision over the game. Not only in Hampshire, but in other districts did the laws press heavily. A few houses were cleared away, but no churches. The records of the monastic houses in existence at the time of the Doomsday survey continued unbroken, and eloquently refute the old story of ruthless devastation.

The Saxons, Angles, Jutes, and Frisians were stockbreeders, mostly dependent on their flocks and herds, which fed upon the herbage and mast of the

woodlands. Consequently, the forest land was pasture, and not so solitary and wild as one is sometimes led to imagine. Dogs were a necessity of the herdsman, but a pest to the deer; and poachers roamed the glades, less inspired by hatred of the Norman, and a desire to do him a bad turn on every occasion, than by cupidity, or hunger for the meat of the red deer or wild boar. The Saxon chase, free to all, had furnished nourishing food in plenty; when William I and Rufus cried "hands off," the plaint was bitter and loud.

It became necessary to define the forest laws and devise machinery for putting them in motion. So began a feud between lords of the land and men of the soil which is by no means dead in the twentieth century. The old Forest Courts were doubtless no more lenient with stealers of game eight hundred years ago than are some of the "benches" of to-day — different times and ideas of punishment taken into reckoning.

In Saxon and Danish times only untenanted tracts appear to have been placed under ban as Royal hunting-grounds, while the penalties against the Royal enactments were mild compared with the savage punishments of the Normans. The Saxon and Danish kings loved the chase well enough, but with the Normans it was a passion. Norman blood to-day continues the strain, but is obliged to be content with fox-hunting and rod and gun. It would be interesting to examine the lists of M.F.H. in the light of this idea, and trace their genealogy.

A change in the game laws became a necessary measure in introducing the feudal system into England. For political purposes it was desirable not only to curtail and abolish many of the privileges previously enjoyed by the earls and thanes, and other landholders, but also to prevent them, as far as possible, from using arms. William decreed that the right of hunting was vested solely in himself, and could only be exercised by him or by those of his nobles to whom he was "graciously pleased to accord such privileges." Thus the Norman usurped the monopoly within the Royal preserves, whereas before the Conquest two descriptions of chase had been recognized, the higher being reserved for the King, the lower enjoyed by the landowner.

Imagine the outcry, the fury, the execrations, when William's laws were put into force.

For more than six and a half centuries the statements of the monkish historians concerning the seizure and devastation of Hampshire were accepted, until Richard Warner and Gough both, in 1789, made out a good case for discrediting them. This is Warner's version.

"*Foresta.*—A forest in general: but it more particularly means the New Forest, a tract of land which the Conqueror had afforested a few years before the time of the survey. William of Malmesbury, H. Huntingdon, Walter Mapes, and some other prejudiced monkish writers, have vilified the Norman for this measure, which they reprobate as an act of merciless

injustice. But a perusal of that part of our extract which relates to the Forest will convince they cannot altogether have adhered to the truth in their account of the transaction. We shall there find that the lands comprised in the tract appear, from their low valuation in the time of the Confessor, to have always been unproductive in comparison with other parts of the kingdom, and that notwithstanding this pretended devastation, they sank (in many instances) but little in their value after the afforestment. So that the fact seems to have been, William finding the tract was in a barren state, and yielding but little profit, and being strongly attached to the pleasures of the chase, converted it into a Royal Forest; without being guilty of those violences to the inhabitants which the above-mentioned writers complain of."

But it is late in the day to whitewash William the Conqueror. Let us push on and explore the "barren tract" that he so much esteemed, leaving those who would learn more to read the essay on "Forestry and the New Forest," by J. Nisbet and the Hon. G. W. Lascelles, in the *Victorian Histories of the Counties of England*, from which I have liberally drawn, and Horace G. Hutchinson's deeply interesting and scholarly book on the New Forest.

The New Forest as it exists to-day is a fascinating blend of Nature and industrious forestry. Here we are in a heavy glade, with coppice and thicket and trickling rills, and lo! a wall of black and cloudy fir confronts us. Behind a serene and settled majesty;

NEW FOREST—AMONG THE GIANTS OF KNIGHTWOOD

before us an army of lean brown trunks in serried ranks, bordered by a slender fence. The plantations, which undoubtedly give a rich variety of scenic contrast, are the enclosed lands from which the Forest authorities draw their revenues. The remnants of the old Royal Forest are left to run to seed, as it were, with due regard to public interest and pristine beauty; and very lovely they are. The New Forest has a length of 21 miles by a breadth of 12 miles in its widest part; it covers 92,365 acres, of which 27,620 are private property. At every turn the skyline is serrated with rows of fir spikes, topping banks of elusive purple-black shadows; then comes a rolling, billowy cumulus of rounded beech groves, pale gold and green-silver in the spring; then heath, velvet-brown in the spring and early season, but a riot of roseate tones when the year draws to the autumn, the colour vanishing as winter's grey mood steals across it; and ashen it remains, beneath an ashen sky, until the tossing plumes of the silver birch again proclaim the spring. Near at hand are delicious patches of greensward, kept clear of heath by the industrious and hungry wild ponies that crop it close. The golden sand peeps out in patches occasionally, but as a rule the world wears a carpet mantle here, giving richness and nobility to what was once a very "horrid" tract of forbidding country.

There still remain portions of barren heath so desolate that only the wind visits them. If the yellow ribbon of long undulating road did not point the way

of destiny, and indicate to man that yonder, at the end of miles of dismal heather, lie abodes of comfort and the path to softer lands, these forlorn heaths, treeless, unkempt, and blackened as by fire, would rarely tempt the feet of the loneliest man.

CHAPTER IX

THE WHITE MONKS OF BEAULIEU

". . . In ages past
A dreary desert and a gloomy waste,
To savage beasts and savage laws a prey,
And kings more furious and severe than they."—POPE

THESE heaths are bleak indeed, and to reach Beaulieu Abbey, where the rich monks held sway for many centuries, a bleak tract must be crossed between the village and Beaulieu Road Station.

The Abbey, as is appropriate, is approached through a grove. The blighted heath gives way to glades and a river; and round the edge of a tidal mill-pond are nestling cottages. At low water the river vanishes, leaving ruddy mud-flats; but anon returns softly, innocent and gentle, pretending that it never ran away. Sulky swans lead their cygnets among the reeds, and occasionally rise o'erhead in undulating flight, and swoop down, fearsome, startling objects, flapping their great wings and scattering jewels of spray in the sun-rays.

All is rich and fertile here. The countryside is stamped indelibly with the impress of genera-

tions of prosperity; a velvet smoothness, like the turf at Oxford that has been rolled for hundreds of years.

Beaulieu Abbey, with the sea creeping daily to its front door laden with fat fish, and the forest behind to supply venison and wood, and pasture swine, was very comfortably situated, despite the tracts of blasted heath. It prospered and grew rich, and claimed its grants from the Royal hunters, who graciously allowed the felling of oaks for building timber. Witness the warrant of Henry VII to the Earl of Arundel, the keeper of the New Forest—

"By the King

"We wil and charge you that unto our trusty and right wel beloved Cousin the erl of Ormond or unto the bringer herof in his name ye deliver or doo to be delivered twelf Okes convenable for tymbre to be taken within our Baiffship of Bewley in oure Forest called the New Forest, or in such places within the same Forest as oure Cousin shall thinke moost metely and convenient for him, and these oure letters shalbe yor Warrant. Geven undre oure signet at oure Citie of Winchestere the xix dey of October the second yere of oure Reign.

"To or Right trusty and right welbeloved Cousin Therl Arundell warden of our Newe Forest in our Countie of South'ton and to his Lieutenant and keepers there."

BEAULIEU ABBEY

"The long ribb'd aisles are burst and shrunk,
The holy shrines to ruin sunk,
Departed is the pious monk,
God's blessing on his soul!"

Coleridge

The Abbey to-day is a beautiful ruin, with many of the principal features of the old place still preserved, such as the refectory, the huge old kitchen, and the well-scored stone upon which the fish was cut up—more frequently than on Fridays to judge by the hollow worn in the slab.

The monastery was of immense size and considerable importance, in close touch with the Crown, and playing a vital part in politics. Kings visited it, and granted more than the usual favours; one employed the services of its Abbot as intermediary with the Pope.

It was also a trading community, for in 1281 it received a grant of protection and safe-conduct for taking a ship laden with corn and other goods from time to time to Gascony, and other places within the King's power, returning with wine and other goods. Thus the sources of the Abbey's revenue were many and various, temporal and spiritual, and included fisheries in Little Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. Nor did they scorn the pleasures of the chase. They were granted honourable privileges, and hunted the deer by Royal licence.

The Abbey had a most exceptional characteristic, namely, the right of giving life sanctuary within its precincts to offenders against the law. "The Great Close" of Beaulieu opened its doors to fugitives, and no matter what the crime, once the offender could make his way within its gates the civil power could not touch him. A wonderful tribute to the power of the Church.

Here, in 1471, after she had landed at Southampton on Easter Day, the very day of the battle of Barnet, flew the Countess of Warwick, wife of the king-maker. Here, too, in 1497, after having raised the siege of Exeter and deserting his troops at Taunton, fled the worthless Perkin Warbeck, not only an impostor but a coward, closely pursued by Lord Daubeney and five hundred men. Persuaded, however, by Henry VII's promises, he left his shelter only to become a prisoner in the Tower, and finally to hang at Tyburn.

Offenders, strangely enough, remained here in sanctuary and lived for years under the monastic wing; and it is somewhat of a mystery why Beaulieu, which was notoriously concerned with its own affairs, more especially those temporal, should have extended this strange hospitality to felons and murderers. Did they discriminate and take into account the provocation, and all the conditions leading up to the offences? Or did they fling open their doors as men acting under a vow? At any rate the right came under the heading of privileges, though it was not supposed to be extended to political refugees.

On the day of the surrender the Commissioner wrote to Cromwell stating that there were thirty-two sanctuary men there for debt, felony, and murder, who had their houses and grounds, where they lived with their wives and children. They declared that if sent to other sanctuaries they would be undone, and desired to remain there for their lives, provided no

NEW FOREST

THE OLD WALLS OF BEAULIEU ABBEY

more were admitted. Most of them were miserable debtors.

The canon law recognized the right of sanctuary as good against all offences except only sacrilege and high treason; the latter, as an offence against the sacred majesty, being in itself a kind of sacrilege.

There are few places in England where the old-world spirit lingers and spreads a gentle brooding calm as it does at Beaulieu. There is a hush upon the plain; the houses nestle deeply; and from the Manor, at intervals, a sweet-toned bell of rare quality speaks once, a note without a suspicion of melancholy, and silver as the gleaming mill-pond.

The hamlet lapses into somnolence. A lowing herd saunters down the village street in search of a gate giving upon green meadows, and disappears. The sun beats down, and the fresh sea-breeze ruffles the leaves, that only cry "hush," and fall asleep again. The swans preen their feathers on the bank, and anon steal up the concealed river, zigzagging through an expanse of sedge, jade-green at its base, tawny gold at its summit, to their nests. And the tidal water all the time performs its stealthy magic; changing the red mud-flats into a broad lagoon, which in turn disappears, resetting the scene in tones of red-brown, without troubling a soul—except, perhaps, the man who oils the wheel of the tidal mill.

And the quiet of the place is delicious. Few roads lead here, and no railways. There probably never was a time in its history when Beaulieu was of so little

importance in the realm of actualities as now, except for the periodical invasion of excursionists in the summer season.

It is, of course, a show place, and a professional guide escorts the visitor over the more interesting portions of the Abbey ruins. One is impressed at once by the combination of artistic taste and uncouth structure in the old settlement. It is the domestic touch which appeals unconsciously to the majority of visitors, as is perhaps proper in a sanctuary whose principal business must have been the care of sinners' bodies rather than the care of souls. Extensive alterations and restorations are in progress, the manner of the old architecture being retained as far as possible; yet it is rather a shock to find electric light bulbs. The ancient refectory—not a beautiful exterior by any means—has become a parish church, and a place of present-day public worship; and old grain lofts are changed into lordly upper rooms.

The grounds of the Abbey were about a square mile in extent, and enclosed by a stone wall of considerable thickness; part of the wall remains, and encloses the fishpond on the eastern side. Seeing the place to-day, it is easy to realize that it was once a town in little. The outer wall was necessary as a defensive measure in wilder times, owing to the danger from sea rovers; it was so easy for a privateer to creep up the estuary and make a dash upon the wealthy colony.

The remains of the original chapel floor, as they now exist, are sufficient to give an idea of its former grandeur

NEW FOREST—NEAR BALMER LAWN

—the extent of the ground area was nearly equal to Winchester Cathedral. Built at a period when the Early English style was budding into the Decorative, it consisted of a grand nave and side aisles, and the choir ended with an apse, a very unusual, but a very beautiful, arrangement. The flooring was of fine encaustic tiles; those remaining are partially protected by woodwork. Grass grows over it all now. The ancient site is only a map of grey and green, with all the ground-plan traced in lines of stone.

A great deal of loving care has been expended in retaining the ancient character, both of Abbey and village. Water from a spring on Harford Heath, about a mile distant (near the celebrated Monk's Well), is used to this day by the villagers, having been brought thither and connected with each house by the late Lord Montague, who restored the whole of the ancient mains.

The destruction of the immense buildings at the dissolution could have been no easy matter. The stones were carried away to Hurst, to be used in building the castle there, and the lead was utilized in the erection of Calshot.

The grave of Isabella, first wife of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, King of the Romans—the richest Prince in Christendom—was discovered by the Rev. F. W. Baker, in front of what was the high altar, and the heart of her husband in a marble vase rested beside her. The tomb of his second wife has also been discovered—but it will be noted his heart was with the first.

At the time of the Dissolution the estimated yearly

revenue was £428, 6s. 8d., equal to about £3000 of our currency, but a sum which seems very inadequate for the maintenance of a great establishment that took forty-two years to build, and harboured families in sanctuary besides the Cistercian monks. One wonders, also, how these Cistercians were able to carry out the Rule of St. Benedict, which was the foundation of their Order, "to labour with their own hands for their sustenance; to maintain perpetual silence except to the Superior; to use no dyed garment; and to spend much time in their cells in contemplation."

If for nothing else, we ought to be grateful to Beaulieu Abbey for one peculiarly illuminating glimpse into the dim past full of suggestion. The stone for its building in the early part of the thirteenth century was brought from the Binstead Limestone Quarries, in the Isle of Wight; and common tradition has it "that the carts employed traversed the dry bed of the Solent on their way across." What a touch of antiquity is here! How the centuries seem to stretch. One forgets how busy the southern sea has been, making new geography while kings were making history. But alas for the picturesqueness of the idea! No self-respecting geologist will countenance any notion so absurd.

. . . . . .

The oaks of the New Forest are fine and numerous, but their age is nothing phenomenal, nor are there any of really enormous size. This is due to the Forest's proximity to Portsmouth and other shipbuilding yards, which have denuded it of its best during the last two or

three centuries. There remain, however, one or two giants, such as the Knightwood Oak at Mark Ash, and the King and Queen at Boldrewood; but their girth cannot compare with the Major Oak of Sherwood, nor with the Druid Oak at Burnham Beeches, or the Newland Oak in the Forest of Dean.

The Knightwood Oak, to which visitors are taken as to a shrine, is hemmed in by other trees and surrounded by an irritating fence. It is not very imposing. The King and Queen are also of no great wonder. They are among the deodars at Boldrewood, near a cottage which is the residence of the Keeper of Boldrewood Walk.

This cottage was one of the Royal hunting lodges—though only a portion of the kitchen wall remains—and it was last inhabited by a Lady Londonderry. In this Lodge lived the Lord Delaware, Keeper of the Forest, who in 1745 erected the stone which marked the reputed scene of Rufus's death. Gone are the bricks and stones of the Lodge, but close by in the thicket is a strange medley of trees of the old garden (and a fine garden it must have been) growing in a tangle, gone back to the wild. Garden and Forest have mated.

Amid upstarts of the foresters' planting and hoary beech of Stuart days, tall yews, *arbor vitæ*, laburnum with its yellow cascades of blossom, chestnut, holly and rhododendron writhe and twist, and struggle skyward in a solemn, darkened stillness, shut in by surrounding deodars, but still retaining below the old green carpet of garden turf.

There is romance here—the sweet, sad pathos of the vanished past; the solemn, patient acceptation of the remorseless march of ages that more commonly asserts itself in ruined temples of stone. The gloom—that unalterable gloom of the evergreen—is intensified and given a funereal touch by the presence of the giant spires of cypress yew, rising from the thicket like tombs.

And over all the darkening cloak of monster beeches, forming cathedral aisles, spreads greedily wherever there is light that it can shut out from the undaunted ancients below. Garden and forest are struggling together for mastery; and the forest is winning. Near by, in a small clearing, where a patch of earth is still turned by the spade, are the remains of one wall of the fruit garden, and of the old kennels of the buck hounds. The dogs no longer bay in the thicket; but the deer, which are wild and make this wood their own, steal in and out under cover of the adjoining shadow. The visitor is lucky if he chances to catch a glimpse of one, for they bound back into their leafy seclusion at the sound or sight of man, fleet-footed with terror, remembering, through the blood of their ancestors, the days of pursuing hoofs and flying arrows.

The beeches of this and Bratley Wood are amongst the finest in the world. Burnham has only a few like them—giants springing from earth to sky, untouched from infancy, and in all the vigour of glorious maturity. The writer measured one in the old garden thicket of Boldrewood that was nearly seventeen feet in circumference, and taller than any of the maiden Beeches of

NEAR MARK ASH, NEW FOREST

"Woods crowding upon woods, hills over hills,
A surging scene, and only limited by the blue distance"

Coleridge

Burnham—and there were many others of commanding beauty and size.

The towering grandeur of the New Forest beeches gives the woods their royal dignity. Wide spaces are everywhere below, and sometimes turf in the clearings; but overhead the bewildering canopies touch and intertwine, doming all beneath in spacious arbours, where the stillness hangs like impalpable mist, and golden sunshafts pierce the hollow with rapier thrusts of living light as breezes draw asunder the clinging leaves.

Campbell's assertion about the beech in the "Beech Tree's Petition" that—

> "Bush or floweret never grew
> My dark unwarming shade below,"

is not altogether true here, for holly and thorn and a tangled thicket sometimes manage to survive, owing to the immense height of the trees allowing the slanting sunrays to nourish the lesser children of the wood.

One understands here why man came to worship in the greenwood. The awesome, stilling, sedative effect of silent groves must have predisposed the human pigmy to disparaging comparisons between himself and God's most infinite majesty. How interesting it would be to follow the psychic processes by which man's brain evolved church architecture from trees (if it ever did). The humble, reverent spirit, engendered by contemplation of gigantic avenues and gloomy groves—notably of evergreen, with their rising branches meeting in pointed arches and avenues, are supposed by some to have

originated the Gothic style. But of that more anon, when we deal with the grand forest aisles of Savernake.

The low esteem in which beech-wood was held for ship building in the days of wooden walls was responsible for the clemency extended to these fine trees. Yet the beech is far from lacking in interest for man. Indeed, its list of virtues and uses is quite formidable as set out by old Evelyn. Let us digress a little and peruse his catalogue of man's obligations to this most beautiful of all forest trees.

"Shepherds frequently inscribed their love verses upon the green bark, which was no bad substitute for the Egyptian papyrus. They also wrote their verses upon the bark of the living tree, and, as the letters must have been of large size, and deeply cut, we may reasonably suppose that they seldom went much further than the names of their mistress, with a few tender epithets. This custom of carving favourites' names on the bark of trees seems to have derived its origin from the simplicity of nature, and must frequently have been common to all ages.

"Beechen bowles curiously carved were much prized by the ancient shepherds, and Pliny relates that beechen vessels were employed in religious ceremonies; but in general they were considered as the furniture of the meanest people. The Beech serves for various uses of the housewife. With it the turner makes dishes, trays, rims for buckets, dresser boards and other utensils. It serves the wheeler and joiner for large screws, etc. The upholsterer uses it for fellies, chairs, bedsteads, etc. It

makes shovels and spade gaffs for the Husbandman, and is useful to the bellows-maker. Floats for fishers nets, instead of cork, are made of its bark. It is good for fuel, billet, bavin, and coals, though one of the least lasting; and its very shavings are good for the fining of wine. Peter Crescentius writes, that the ashes of the beech, with proper mixture, is excellent to make glass with. If the timber lie altogether under water, 'tis little inferior to elm, as I find it practised and affected by shipwrights. Of old they made their Vasa Vindemiatoria and Corbes Messoriæ, as we our pots for strawberries, with the rind of this tree; nay, the vessels to preserve wine in, and that curiously wrought cup, which the shepherd, in the Bucolicks, wagers withal, was engraven by Alcimedon upon the bark of beech.

"Of the thin lamina, or scale of this wood, as our cutlers call it, are made scabbards for swords, and band-boxes, superinduced with thin leather or paper; boxes for writing, hat-cases, and formerly book-covers. I wonder we cannot split it ourselves, but send it to other countries for such trifles. In the cavities of these trees bees much delight to hive themselves. Yet for all this you would not wonder to hear me deplore the so frequent use of this wood, if you did consider that the industry of France furnishes that country for all domestic utensils with excellent Walnut, a material infinitely preferable to the best Beech, which is indeed good only for shade, and for the fire, as being brittle, and exceedingly obnoxious to the worm, where it lies dry, or wet and dry, as has been noted; but being put ten days in water, it will

exceedingly resist the worm. To which, as I said, it is so obnoxious, that I wish the use of it were, by a law, prohibited all joiners, cabinet-makers, and such as do furnish tables, chairs, bedsteads, coffers, screws, etc. They have a way to black and polish it so as to render it like Ebony; and with a mixture of soot and urine, imitate the walnut: but as the colour does not last, so neither does the wood itself, for I can hardly call it timber, soon after the worm has seized it, unless one spunge and imbibe it well with the oil of spike, where they have made holes. Ricciolus, indeed, much commends it for oars; and some say that the vast Argo was built of the Fagus, a good part of it at least, as we learn out of Apollonius.

"But while we condemn the timber we must not omit to praise the mast, which fats our swine and deer; and hath, in some families, even supported men with bread. Chios endured a memorable siege by the benefits of this mast. And, in some parts of France, they now grind the buck in mills; it affords a sweet oil, which the poor people eat most willingly. But there is yet another benefit which this tree presents us; its very leaves, which make a natural and most agreeable canopy all the summer, being gathered about the fall, and somewhat before they are much frost-bitten, afford the best and easiest mattresses in the world to lay under our quilts instead of straw; because of their tenderness and loose lying together, they continue sweet for seven or eight years long, before which time straw becomes musty and hard; they are thus used by divers persons

FINE TIMBER

of quality in Dauphine, and in Switzerland. I have sometimes lain on them to my great refreshment.

"The stagnant water in the hollow trees cures the most obstinate tetters, scabs, and scurfs in man or beast, fomenting the part with it. The leaves chewed are wholesome for the gums and teeth; and the very buds, as they are in winter hardened and dried upon the twigs, make good tooth-pickers. Swine may be driven to mast about the end of August; but it is observed, that, when they feed upon it before it is mature, it intoxicates them for awhile; and that, generally, their fat is not so good and solid, but drips away too soon. In the meantime the kernels of the mast are greedily devoured by squirrels, mice, and, above all, by dormice, who, harbouring in the hollow trees, grow so fat, that, in some countries abroad, they take infinite numbers of them, I suppose, to eat. And what relief they give to thrushes, black-birds, fieldfares, and other birds, everybody knows."

As there are many varieties of beech, so there are great differences in the bark. The New Forest trees have a silvery appearance, their surface broken by speckled patches of moss; whereas at Burnham the colour is grey-green, and the moss hangs differently. In Windsor Forest, separated by only a few miles, the species appear to be the same as at Burnham, although a different aspect is given by the tarring of their claw-like feet—this to defeat the rabbits, those fell enemies of trees.

It is computed that if rats eat fifteen millions of

produce in a year rabbits must eat some millions more of woodland crop, and account for much of the foresters' trouble.

The financial aspect of the shot rabbit was well put in the saying: "Up jumps seven and sixpence, bang goes tuppence, and over rolls tenpence."

CHAPTER X

THE EXECUTION OF RUFUS

"Lo Rufus, tugging at the deadly dart,
Bleeds in the forest like a wounded hart."

THE hot August night was close and dark, heavy with thunder, and charged with that solemn, looming silence which precedes the death of kings.

The sleepers in Malwood Castle tossed upon their couches and snored, or cursed, or lay awake listening, according to the excesses of their libations or the tenderness of their consciences. Some did not close an eye at all for sickening apprehension, and prayed for the safe delivery of Mother Church from a hazardous enterprise.

Rufus, more than most, felt the heat, and shuddered convulsively in his sleep. His uneasy soul was wandering in dreams. A bout of heavy drinking, wild revelry, and sacrilegious boasting had ended in his staggering to bed. He had sworn violent oaths, and cursed all bishops and abbots, and the whole seething crew of holy men who undermined his kingly rule and rendered void his wilful edicts.

These English priests were swallowing up all that

was fat and fruitful in his rough, wild wooded land. Did they mean to leave him only his forests, and the beasts of the chase and the "foules of the air"? At every point his kingly will was thwarted, his authority undermined, every act questioned and modified by the light of portents, dreams, omens, and Scripture texts. He was sick of it—yet afraid.

Warriors he could meet with clash of sword and deal with face to face; but not these dogs of learning and mystery, mumbling in cells and hiding in sanctuaries. The fair realm that once lay bruised and cringing beneath his father's heel was rising, like a half-stunned adder, to sting. These Churchmen held swift communication with each other, in far distant places, and by mysterious channels; they told of deeds before they happened, and spouted magic and devilry.

Without them life would have been simple. The holy men who held communion with spirits in darkened aisles and whispered with departed saints had got upon his nerves.

He shuddered sometimes like a frightened child, and shunned solitude (for it never is, or was, safe for a king to be alone). In the open air, with a flying horse beneath him, he could escape the toils of state and lose himself beneath the shade of friendly oaks; or saunter with a friend from France untainted with the virus of these unconquerable English dogs.

Nevertheless the Church's learned arts were at his service if he liked to pay for them. He could order masses, endow bishoprics, and install abbots. He could

also rob them ; but he could not prevent them giving him cold shudders when sickness laid its clammy hand upon his brow.

The fumes of the wine in his brain died down ; but the hot night inflamed his body ; his unchained fancy fell a-dreaming of holy things, echoes of the imagery of the accursed monks. He dreamed that he was bled, and that the blood gushed up towards heaven and shut out the light of day. In his horror of the doom that ever overhangs a king, assassination, he screamed out, and, according to the old chronicler, "woke with the name of Our Lady on his lips."

He called for a light, and when a taper was brought it could be seen that he was shivering ; a clammy sweat was on his brow, and a wild terror in his eye. "He dared not sleep again," says the chronicler, "but remained awake till daybreak."

When the sun rose he called upon his knights to rise and dress, and descended into the open air to behold the realities of life, to draw the sweet breath of the morning, and smell the scent of the forest trees.

He was not to be left alone, even now, for there came to him Robert Fitzhamon, a foreign monk staying at the Court, and told him of a dream vouchsafed to one beyond the seas. (As if he had not had a surfeit of dreams!) It was the story of a monk who dreamed "that he saw the King enter a church, seize the crucifix, and attempt to tear the arms and legs off. The image, after bearing the insult for some time, struck the King and felled him to the ground. On this fire and smoke

gushed from the King's mouth and veiled from the earth the brightness of the stars."

The King laughed and shrugged his broad shoulders, but, with kingly cunning, bade them give money to the monk. If there were ugly portents coming from Heaven by way of holy men, he liked to know; just as men cannot forbear to listen to the slanders that others have said of them, though each is like the stab of a scorpion's tail. He laughed with ugly mirth and clenched his teeth. Yet he was afraid. Perhaps he guessed the truth, that these sinister signs were merely earthly warnings that could not be spoken outright.

He debated whether he ought to go hunting with so much mischief in the air; and his friends urged him to desist and take no risk from devil's work. They too had heard the hissing of the wind.

Perhaps they knew that Rufus was as much under sentence of death at Castle Malwood as was Charles later at Whitehall; only in the early French fashion that abhorred warrants and publicity.

He resolved to occupy his mind and give the forenoon to serious business of state; there was enough of it on hand to put all thoughts of the chase out of his head if he had been minded to devote himself to it. It certainly steadied his brain, and he ate and drank more than usual at the early dinner. After that he felt better and decided to go a-hunting. Rufus was himself again.

He was putting on his boots when a smith drew near, offering him six new catapults, arrows not for the long but for the crossbow. The smith of Malwood, desiring

to gain favour with his King, had laboured right loyally to produce something of quality. Rufus took them joyfully, praised the work of the craftsman, and courteously gave a pair to Sir Walter Tirel, his friend from France, who was standing by. The two were to ride together.

Tirel was a French knight, born at Pontoise, who came to England "commended to the King," who graciously received him. A fellow-countryman, and a proficient archer skilled in all the noble Norman arts, was always welcome; and William promised Tirel some fine sport in the New Forest, of which his guest had doubtless heard much good account.

Suddenly there came a monk from Gloucester with a letter from Abbot Serlo, who therein informed the King that one of the brethren had dreamed a dream.

Rufus smothered an oath and listened, pale with anger, curiosity—and fear.

The monk, in a vision of the night, had seen "the Saviour and all the hosts of Heaven standing round the great white throne. Then the Virgin, robed in light, had flung herself at the feet of her Son, and prayed Him by His precious blood and agony on the Cross to take pity on the English; prayed Him, too, as He was judge of all men and avenger of all wickedness, to punish the King. The Saviour answered her, 'You must be patient and wait. Retribution will in time befall the wicked.'"

The King only laughed with sardonic, savage mirth. Were these real omens, or merely threats! Again he was advised to desist from sport.

"Does he think," cried the King, "that I am like the English, who throw up their business for dreams?"[1]

He strode to his horse, with his knights behind him, his bowmen, and foresters. His brother Henry was of the party, William of Breteuil, Robert Fitzhamon, and a few others. A finely picturesque company, as they sallied forth to the jingling of their heavily caparisoned steeds, the winding of horns, and the baying of dogs. The King chatted with Tirel, and we may safely assume that Henry lagged behind; for Rufus had a way of riding hard, with a furious urging of his steed that stained his spurs with blood.

Sir Walter Tirel saw little sport; somehow the party would not keep together. But at sundown a fine stag was sighted, the hounds were loosed from leash, and away went the King and his friend. But the others, by some stupidity, were scattered about the forest, so that none came up with him—except Tirel. Relying on his huntsmen to round up the stag, the King waited on foot with his crossbow ready. Tirel was ready too.

The setting sun was full in William's eyes. There was a crash, and a crackle of the underwood. Tirel's horse slewed round—a dart sped through the air—and while Rufus gazed in surprise and uncertainty, wondering, perhaps, whether the dark thing in the bush was man or beast, an arrow pierced his heart.

He fell, with horror in his eyes, and tugging at the dart. And as his life's blood flowed, lightning remembrances flickered in the inmost chambers of his soul.

[1] These are the last recorded words of the Red King.

NEW FOREST—ON THE LYNDHURST ROAD

Visions of a bloodstained heaven, of plundered abbeys, snarling priests, and—brother Henry!

Tirel turned and fled. He declared, nevertheless, that it was not his bow which sent the bolt, although he was known to be the only man alone with the King. (Later he swore that he was not in England at the time.)

When at last the straggling huntsmen gathered round, they learned that an arrow from Tirel's bow had "glanced against an oak, and entered the King's breast."

What mattered the manner of it? Rufus was no more. The King was dead—long live the King!

Henry's word was law, and there must be no fuss. A dozen different descriptions of the event flew from mouth to mouth; the forest trees whispered it to neighbouring abbeys, and a great sigh of relief went up. Eyes twinkled with malevolent satisfaction; monks crossed themselves and murmured of the judgment of God upon a king who had dared to touch the treasury of Holy Church.

Some say that, as his life ebbed, the King called for the Lord's Body, and a hunter took herbs and flowers and gave them to the King to eat. Others, that when death approached he repented of his evil deeds. Be that as it may, an exact narration of "an accident" of this kind must necessarily be garbled when so few were present, and all eager to proclaim their absence afterwards.

The huntsmen made a bier, and laid it on two palfreys, and covered the body with the mantles of Robert Fitzhamon and William of Montfichet. Then

they took him to the minster of St. Swithins, and Bishop Walkelin watched by the body. Afterwards it was "buried with such worship and saying of masses as no man had ever heard before."

They lied who said that all fled, and "that a charcoal burner took the body in his cart to Winchester, and that for his evil life no bell was rung, no mass was said, no offerings made."

That was not the way of Churchmen, who played with kings as with pawns. Churlish they might be; but if Henry were in the field, for appearance' sake, and for other reasons, he would not have dared let the body go to Winchester.

The news of the King's death, so say the legends of the times, was known in strange ways in far-off places long before the tidings could have been brought by the utmost speed of man: sooner, it would seem, than the moment when the arrow hit the designed, or unwilling, mark.

Strange indeed! Although among savage races to-day news flies by unknown channels with incredible swiftness.

On the day of the King's death it is recorded that an archbishop's clerk at Lyons was at the matin service, singing with his eyes shut, when he felt a small paper put into his hand and a voice bade him read. He looked up. The bearer of the paper was gone, but he read the words "King William is dead." No miracle of speed this; rather an intelligent anticipation of events.

The fact that Walter Tirel came from France, and

fled back there unheeded and unchecked by the new King, suggests that he was but hastening with the news of the success of the plot hatched in the South.

The net round Rufus had been so tightly drawn that the odds were against his escape from the toils; and it was considered safe to spread the joyous news on the day fixed for the assassination (which was apparently the last day of July, though it was postponed until 2nd August).

Rufus had failed in his attempt to strangle the power of the Church. He was not made of the same stuff as Henry VIII; and in his struggle the Fates were against him. He was grappling with a young and growing vine; whereas the vine, though fruitful, was growing old and rotten in the days of Bluff King Hal.

For centuries after the arrow pierced the heart of Rufus, kings were always circumspect when beating at an abbey's gate. The Church in Norman days could not execute, but it could nevertheless "remove," to use a modern term; and when the deed was done it was rather a thing of merit, like the crushing of a viper with an unshod foot.

Rufus died by a conspiracy of his prelates, who "held the crozier in one hand and the battle-axe in the other," uniting in their own persons both sacred and military offices. During this very reign we have records of deliberate confessions of monks who murdered their own abbots, deeming they were doing God a service.

Brother Henry scurried to Winchester like a fox to his burrow, running all the way in his haste to seize the Royal treasury before his kinsman's flesh was cold; and

he promptly filled up the many sees and benefices which Rufus—who had been beholden to the clergy for his crown—had unjustly kept vacant to farm the incomes. And he instituted no inquiry into the circumstances of the misdirected arrow in Canterton Glen. A dead king and a dead dog are equally impotent; and trees keep their secrets better than stone walls.

It is significant that William's brother Richard, and also his nephew of that name, met a sudden death in the same forest; and the miserable fate of "Robert le Diable," the elder brother and rightful heritor of the crown, in Cardiff Castle—the prince whose eyes Henry put out — does not incline one to give the benefit of any doubt to the eager throne-grabber.

The particular oak from which the arrow was said to have glanced is now no more. Charles II caused a fence to be put round it; but it went the way of all oaks in 1745.

It is in keeping with the mysterious business that the memorial stone standing in the Glen to-day should be in a casing of iron, in the shape of a triangular prism—one thinks of an arrow-head at once—with an inscription full of charity, which runs as follows :—

"Here stood the oak tree on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell at a stag, glanced and struck King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, on the breast, of which he instantly died, on the 2nd day of August, Anno 1100.

"King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, being slain, as before related, was laid in a cart belonging

"A lady of 'a certain age,' which means
Certainly aged"

Don Juan

to one Purkis, and drawn from thence to Winchester, and buried in the Cathedral Church of that city.

"That the spot where an event so memorable had happened might not hereafter be forgotten, this stone was set up by John Lord Delaware, who had seen the tree growing in this place. Anno 1745.

"This stone having been so much mutilated, and the inscription on each of its three sides defaced, this more durable memorial, with the original inscriptions, was erected in the year 1841, by Wm. Sturges Bourne, warden."

But, oh cruel irony! on one of the curious old boxes on the wall of the choir of Winchester Cathedral is the following inscription :—

"In hac et altera, é regione cista reliquæ sunt ossium Cnuti et Rufi Regum; Emmæ Reginæ, Winæ et Alwini Episcoporum."

(In this, and the opposite chest are the remains of the bones of Canute and Rufus; Queen Emma; Wina and Alwyn, Bishops.)

The bishops never left him, even in death. His dust was mingled with the ashes of holy men.

. . . . . .

It is only natural that a forest should impress its inhabitants with something of its own individuality, and tinge their speech and thought. The New Forest peasant, according to Mr. Wise, whose intimate knowledge of the district was exceptional, puts absolute faith in all traditions, believing as firmly in St. Swithin as his forefathers did when the saint was Bishop of

Winchester; turns his money, if he has any, when he sees the new moon; fancies that a burn is a charm against leaving the house; that witches cannot cross over a brook; that the death's-head moth was only seen after the execution of Charles I; that the man in the moon was sent there for stealing wood from the Forest.

Not only this, but the burrows on the plains are named after fairies, and the peasant imagines, like the treasure-seekers of the Middle Ages, that they contain untold wealth, and that the forest wells are full of gold. . . .

Odd customs and old ceremonies still linger. Mummers still perform at Christmas. Old women "go gooding," as in some parts of Essex, on St. Thomas's Day. Boys and girls go "shroving" on Ash Wednesday, that is begging for meat and drink at farmhouses, singing the rude snatch—

> "I come a shroving, a shroving,
> For a piece of pancake,
> For a piece of truffle-cheese
> Of your own making."

Plenty, too, of old love superstitions remain—about ash boughs with an even number of leaves, and "four-leaved" clover, concerning which runs a Forest rhyme—

> "Even ash and four-leaved clover,
> You are sure your love to see
> Before the day is over."

Then, too, we must not forget the Forest proverbs. "All in copse," that is, indistinct. "A good bark

year makes a good wheat year." "A poor dry thing, let it go." Again, "Eat your own side, speckle-back," is a common Forest expression used to greedy people. "To rattle like a horse in a holme bush," is another—a holme bush means holly. "There is but one good mother-in-law, and she is dead," corresponding with the German, "There is no good mother-in-law but she who wears a green gown" (in the churchyard).

"The cuckoo goes to Beaulieu Fair to buy him a greatcoat," referring to the arrival of the cuckoo about the 15th April, while the day of the fair was known as "cuckoo day." A similar proverb is to be found in nearly every county.

"He won't climb up May Hill" signifies that a man won't live through the cold spring. Again, "A dog is made fat in two meals," as applied to upstarts or purse-proud people.

The barrows which are scattered all over the Forest are known to the foresters by the name of "butts." Superstition connects them with the fairies, so we find on Beaulieu Plain two known as the Pixies' Cave and Laurence's Barrow.

Badly grown or stunted trees are called "bustle-headed"; the tops of oaks when lopped "flitterings." Stump trees are known as "stools," and a "stool stick" is used in opposition to "maiden timber" which has never been touched with the axe.

So also with the cattle; a "shadow cow" is one whose body is a different colour to its hind and fore

parts. A "huff" means a drove or herd, while the cattle which are agisted are said to be "wood roughed." A cow without horns is called a "not cow." (Note Chaucer's line, "a not hed had he, with a brown visage.")

Again, the good old English word "loute," to bend, bow, and so to touch the hat, is heard in the Forest, though nearly forgotten elsewhere in England, and found in Longfellow's "Children of the Lord's Supper"—

> "as oft as they named the Redeemer
> Lowly louted the boys, and lowly the maidens all courtesied."

Again, "fogey" for passionate, "futy" for foolish, "rue" for hedge, "glutch" to stifle a sob, and such plurals as placen, housen, peasen, etc. So also the word "charm" or "churm," signifying noise—

> "Like a swarm of bees all in a churm."

One or two historical traditions still linger. Thus the peasant will tell of the French Fleet which in June 1690 lay off the Needles, and of the Battle of Beachy Head whose cannonading was heard even in the Forest; but who fought, or why, he is equally ignorant.

One tradition ought to be told concerning the terrible winter of 1787, known in the Forest until recent years as "the hard year." The storm began in the night, and in the morning doors were blocked with snowdrifts. It continued all day. The straggling

A NEW FOREST STREAM

hedges were soon covered, and by and by the woods themselves disappeared. After a week's snow a heavy frost followed. The snow hardened, the people went out shooting, and wherever a breathing hole in the snow appeared, fired and nearly always killed a hare. The snow continued on the ground for seven weeks; and when it melted the stiffened bodies of hares and deer covered the plains.

Mr. Wise, besides being an historian, was an antiquarian; and his description of his excavations of a Roman pottery at Crockle, in company with Mr. Bartlett, is interesting.

"Beginning at the extremity, we soon came upon a kiln, which, like the others discovered by Mr. Bartlett, only showed its presence by the crumbling red brick earth. An enormous old oak stump had grown close beside it, and around the bole were heaped the drinking vessels and oil flasks, which its now rotten roots had once pierced.

"Nothing could better show, as the excavation proceeded, the former state of the works. Here were introduced in the stiff, yellow, putty-like clay, of which they were made, masses of earthenware, the charcoal with which they were fired still sticking to their sides—pieces of vitreous-looking slag and grey lime of cinders mixed with the red brick earth of the kiln. The ware remained just as it was cast inside by the potter. You might tell by the bulging of the sides, and the bright metallic glaze of the vessels, how the workmen had overheated the kilns: see, too, by the crookedness

of the lines, where his hand had missed its stroke. All was here. The potter's finger-marks were still stamped upon the bricks. Here lay the brass coin which he had dropped, and the tool he had forgotten, and the plank upon which he had tempered the clay.

"The most noticeable specimens were a strainer, or colander, a funnel, part of a lamp with the holes to admit air, and iron tools of the workmen that had dropped into the furnace and been a good deal melted. The wood was semi-fossilized."

The so-called crockery of the southern part of the Forest is nothing else but the plates of turtles embedded in the freshwater marls.

A further quotation from the old history of Wise may serve to edify intending visitors to the New Forest. His moralizing is naïve and quaint; but his advice is sound, and no apology is made for appropriating it as a "tag" to end this section of our Forest story.

"Our large towns have swollen into provinces. Fashion sways the rich, and necessity compels the poor to live in them. As our wealth increases, our love of nature contracts.

"And here, if this book should induce any readers to visit the Forest, let me earnestly advise them to do so, as far as possible, on foot. I see but this main difference between rich and poor—that the poor work to get money, the rich spend money to get work. And I know no better way for Englishmen to use their superfluous

energies than in learning their country by walking over its best acres.

"I will only ask anyone to make the experiment between walking and driving over the same ground; and see how much he will learn by one, how much lose by the other method."

IV. EPPING, AND THE FOREST OF ESSEX

CHAPTER XI

A FOREST OF THE PEOPLE

WHAT is the secret of the ill-luck of the fair county of Essex? Land well cherished by Church and King, and almost within hail of the Bells of Bow, should surely have grown in esteem with the passing of years. The wide waters of the estuary of the Thames gently lap its shores; the galleons and argosies of countries far and near have sought its coasts and anchored in its harbours for full two thousand years; yet land under every other finger of the compass round the metropolis has grown in favour, while Essex languishes.

Is it the ill-luck of the east wind? The prosperous and the rich drift to the westward of nearly all congeries of human habitations, and the "east end" in so many towns has become synonymous with poverty, congestion, and unloveliness. Yet at the end of the sixteenth century Norden (who made the survey of Windsor) reported of Essex that—

EPPING FOREST—QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HUNTING LODGE, CHINGFORD, SHOWING THE STAIRS UP WHICH SHE IS REPUTED TO HAVE RIDDEN—NOW A MUSEUM

"This shire is most fatt, fruitfull, and full of profitable things, and seemeth to me to deserve the title of the English Goshen, the fattest of the lande: compared to Palestina that floweth with milk and hunnye. But I cannot commende the healthfulness of it: and especially nere the sea coastes, which gave me a most cruell quarterne fever."

The beautiful river Lea, beloved by Izaak Walton, all tangled up with water-lilies, flowing through luxurious buttercup meadows, babbling idly over stony shallows and winding lazily through woods, was still a wild and lovely stream as far south as Woodford within the memory of the present generation. Its insanitary waters were no reproach; the teeming millions of the industrious east had not yet polluted its tributaries nor defiled its banks; and an hour's walk eastward from the Bank of England, by way of Shoreditch and Kingsland, brought one to green fields which stretched uninterruptedly away into the Forest of Essex. In olden days its nearness to the Royal Palaces and the Tower made it popular with Royalty, and it was more hunted than any other except perhaps the New Forest.

An old writer, quoted by Mr. Buxton in his *Epping Forest*, especially commended Waltham and Windsor Forests "on account of their convenience for the entertainment of foreign princes, and their agents and ambassadors, because the nearness of these two forests unto the city doth much add to the pleasure of them." But not only the Kings and their guests hunted at Waltham. My Lord Mayor, who it must be re-

membered was (and is) an earl, also claimed the right to issue forth with horn and hounds, accompanied by a motley crowd of burgesses, citizens, and apprentices ; but the right is questioned by recent authorities.

In Saxon times, and for some centuries later, a large proportion of the county of Essex as far as the sea was "waste." The needs of London were modest. Her children grew fruit and vegetables in their own gardens. Grain in barges floated down—not up-stream ; sheep pastured on the verdant banks of the Thames where Waterloo Station now stands. All north and east of Smithfield was practically open country.

Gradually and remorselessly economic pressure and the growth of population made it imperative that the metropolis should spread its feeders and suckers into the "waste" and woodland held sacred by Forest law to the occasional "princely delight" of the reigning sovereign. Increasing traffic with the Continent made the south-east coast very populous, as testified by the many seaports and flourishing minsters—most of them in ruins now, or dwindled into insignificance. The "faire shire" of Essex teemed with agriculturists, and the Forest boundaries began to shrink.

The limitations set to it by the Charter of John confined it to the neighbourhood of Waltham ; whereas its boundaries in the time of Edward I extended from the river Ley on the west, to the Romford Road on the east ; and its northern limit passed through Nazing, Abridge, and Havering-atte-Bower. Epping, whose name it now bears, must have been of small importance.

It was the custom of the county in later times to call the whole Forest by the names of the principal places, such as Waltham, Epping, Kingswood, Writtle, and Hatfield; as well as integral portions, such as Theydon, Loughton, Chingford, Havering, and Hainault, as though they were independent areas.

Three-fourths of the county were ruled outside forest jurisdiction after the perambulations of 1225. Henry III attempted to upset this disafforestation, but in 1300, when Edward I was short of money, the commoners made a fresh and definite perambulation of all the forests a condition of their grants, and the forest area of Essex was restricted to the Waltham and Havering corner of the county.

In Tudor times four-fifths of the county were under some sort of cultivation. In 1630 boundaries were again laid down which practically agreed with those of 1301; but in the meantime the relations between Crown and people had so much altered that a rebellious spirit prevailed among the commoners. Men were no longer content to grow crops for the King's deer to trample and destroy, or to allow fair pastures which were yearly increasing in value to be forbidden to sheep and swine.

James I preferred a Bill in the House of Commons to have their pretended right of commoning with sheep abolished: "the success whereof was, that that wise, grave, and just house . . . upon the first reading thereof in a very full house, without one negative voyce did reject the bill; and in detestation thereof, ordered and caused

the same to be torn to pieces in the open house sitting in full Parliament."

The sheep in this instance had been turned out in the grounds, wastes, woods, and coverts of the Forest, and particularly those which lay within Chappell Hainault and West Hainault; which were His Majesty's "own soyle and inheritance, and parcell of the possessions of his Crowne of England, and the very Gardeine of the said forest in respect of the delight and comoriousnesse thereof for the hunting and chasing of the Redd and fallow deare."

Swine were not commonable, and banned in Waltham Forest, their presence there being unlawful; "but it being of great benefit to the occupiers of houses and cottages near the Forest to keep, turn, and let them go 'at Ley' (liberty) in the Forest, the liberty has been connived at, so long as the swine has been rung, and prevented from doing damage to the vert of the Forest."

The crown officials of Stuart days, in their financial distress, attempted to raise money by extending the area of Waltham Forest; but failing that, an attempt, also futile, was made to secure its disafforestation and sale. This resulted in an Act of the Long Parliament to fix the boundaries; and a perambulation revealed that Waltham Forest comprised about 60,000 acres.

To show what a truculent spirit had arisen in the once humble, down-trodden commoners, the Essex men were guilty of some "fashious actions," and even had the temerity "to hold a conventicle in the very brake

NEAR AMBESBURY BANKS, EPPING FOREST

where the King's stags should have been lodged for his hunting the next morning."

It was reported that ". . . the said inhabitants by strong hand do make havoc and insufferable spoil of the woods, drive and keep their cattle upon His Majesty's said part of land, and being disturbed by the purchaser's agents, do make pound-breaches, rescue their cattle, and beat and wound such as disturb them."

This was but one of many straws which should have warned the luckless Charles of the swinging of the wind. The Forest laws still survived; but who would have dared execute them literally in the face of the growing tide of popular liberty? The times were out of joint. Yet Charles attempted it, and revived the eyres and exacted penalties. But contrast the severity of the ancient statutes with his power to enforce them. One of the old enactments decreed that—

"If any freeman shall chase away a Dere, or a wilde beast out of the Forest; whether the same be done by chaunce, or of set purpose, so that thereby the wilde beast is forced by swift running to lyll out the tong, or to breathe with his tong out of his mouth; he shall paie to the King ten shillings amends for the same offence: but if he be a servile person, then he shall double the same recompence: but if he be a bondman, then he shall lose his skinne. . . .

"If a greedy ravening dogg bite a wild beast, then the owner of the same dogg shall yeeld a recompence to the King for the same according to the valew of

a freeman, which is twelve times a hundred shillings. If a Roiall beast shall be bitten, then the owner of the dogg shal be gilty of the greatest offence. . . ."

This trouble with the dogs, which were of course necessary to the pastoral inhabitants, originated the practice of compulsory "lawing" or disabling, to prevent them running at the deer. Scott refers to it thus in his notes to *Ivanhoe*—

"The disabling dogs, which might be necessary for keeping flocks and herds from running at the deer, was called *lawing*, and was in general use. The Charter of the Forest, designed to lessen those evils, declares that inquisition, or view, for lawing dogs, shall be made every third year, and shall be then done by the view and testimony of lawful men, not otherwise; and they whose dog shall be then found unlawed shall give three shillings for mercy, and for the future no man's ox shall be taken for lawing. Such lawing also shall be done by the Assize commonly used, and which is, that three claws shall be cut off without the ball of the right foot."

Manwood describes this cruel operation in detail: "The mastive being brought to set one of his forefeet upon a piece of wood eight inches thick and a foot square, then one with a mallet, setting a chissell two inches broad upon the three clawes of his forefoot, at one blow doth smite them clean off."

This lawing, though originally intended only for mastiffs, was usually applied to all dogs in Forest bounds; but the right to have unlawed dogs was not

infrequently granted to persons of position and influence, such as the Canons of Waltham, the Bishop of London; and the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's had grants exempting their house dogs in Essex Forest. The greyhound was the dog in commonest use for hunting; but it is thought that the greyhound was a larger and more powerful dog, more resembling our deerhound. Dr. Cox, in his chapter on "Hounds and Hunting," practically proves this by a reference to Dr. Caius (*English Dogges*, 1576), who describes the greyhound as—

"A spare and bare kinde of dogge (of flesh but not of bone), some are of a greater sorte, and some of a lesser: some are smooth skynned, and some are curled: the bigger thereof are appointed to hunt the bigger beasts, and the smaller serve to hunt the smaller accordingly."

Custom varied in the matter of lawing dogs in different forests. Thus in the ancient forests of Worcestershire it was termed "hombling." All dogs that could not be drawn through a strap of eighteen inches and a barleycorn in length, had the further joints of the two middle claws cut away, for which operation the owner was awarded in the sum of 3s. 1d. In Epping, only such dogs were allowed as would go through the Lord Vesci's stirrup, who was Justice in Eyre in Edward II's time.

The Forest Courts in later years were more concerned with human poachers and stealers of wood. The penalties were usually fines, sometimes heavy, some-

times nominal, according to the rank of the offenders. Poachers of the King's deer were by no means confined to the needy classes. Sometimes they were Church dignitaries of high rank, at one in spirit with Friar Tuck, and claiming fancied rights granted in forgotten charters.

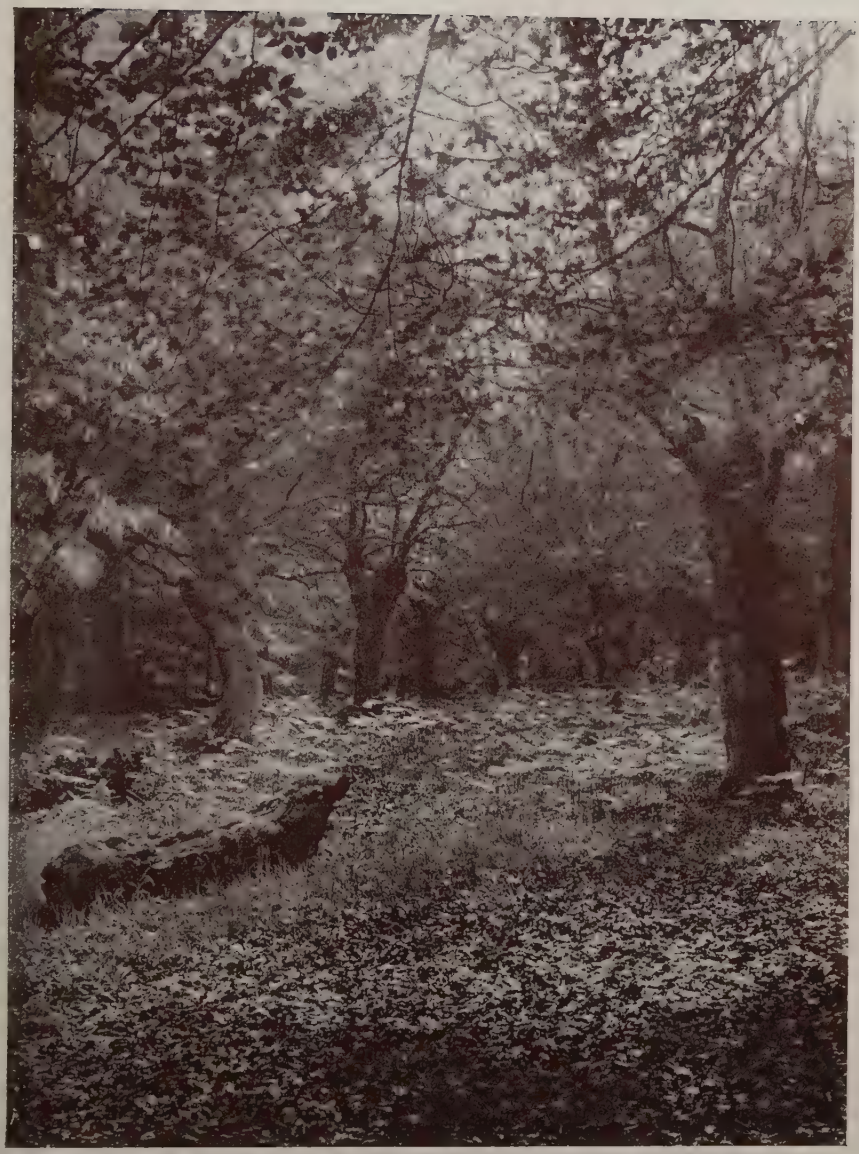
Fortunately for London, Charles I did not sell Waltham Forest; and its history ever since, right down to the three years' lawsuit of recent times, has been a long, intermittent struggle between *meum* and *tuum*.

The lords of the manors were the virtual owners of this soil; but of what value was such ownership when the commoners could wander at will, and drive their cattle, and cut wood with impunity? The manorial rights could be proven by faded scrolls of parchment and ancient Royal Charters; meanwhile London was spreading her mantle of soot and gold over Epping. Common land, not worth £5, could be raised to £1000 an acre if only the ring fence and the "Trespassers will be prosecuted" boards could be introduced. At last the boards and the fences went up, only to be pulled down again.

And thereby hangs a tale.

The real romance of Epping is the story of one common man, a woodman, who used his axe at midnight, and saw his son die in prison in defence of the right of the commoners of Loughton to lop the trees of Epping Forest.

The name of Willingale should be written in letters of brass and set up in the Forest to commemorate the



EPPING FOREST

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods

martyrdom of a humble citizen who was instrumental in securing for his countrymen the enjoyment for ever of this the finest of the people's playgrounds. The leaves of the Forest have fallen some twoscore times since he started his fight with the lords of the manor; but his work remains.

Ever since the days of Queen Elizabeth the commoners of Loughton had enjoyed the right to lop the trees of the Forest from midnight on the eve of St. Martin's Day, November 11, to St. George's Day, April 23; but suddenly the right was declared void. Willingale and his three sons, who contested the validity of the interdiction, were promptly arrested and sent to prison as felons. One of the sons was put in a damp cell, where he caught a severe cold which developed into pneumonia and resulted in death. Not the first of the humble Forest martyrs by any means.

On his release from prison Willingale was advised to put his case before the Commons Preservation Society; and at once a fund of a thousand pounds was raised, and a fierce fight ensued which will be for ever memorable in the annals of law. It continued for three years, and some £240,000 was spent before the whole business was finished, and the people's right to their own was vindicated by the dedication of the Forest to the public. Of this £33,000 was spent in litigation. In the end it was a victory for the people, although old Willingale did not live to see the final triumph of his martyrdom.

To understand the dispute it is necessary to go back

to the very beginning, when the district was known as Waltham Forest, and extended over fifty thousand acres of Essex, subject to Forest law. No fence was allowed high enough to keep out a doe with her fawn; the farmers were forbidden to drive the deer from their crops, upon which they fattened; no building could be erected without the consent of the Forest authorities—"because of the increase of men and dogs and other things that might frighten the deer from their food"; trees could not be cut down without the State's permission, and the Crown officials could enter any private owner's woods within the range of the Forest and cut there the branches of trees, "brouse," for the winter food of the deer. These rights were exercised so late as the nineteenth century.

The Forest Courts consisted of the Court of Attachment, presided over by four verderers elected by the freeholders of the county of Essex, who had summary jurisdiction in offences of a trivial character where the damage was not more than fourpence; and the Court of Swainemote, also presided over by the verderers, assisted by a jury of freeholders, who tried for offences of a more serious kind; they could not, however, pronounce sentence; this was reserved for the highest Court of Justice, held at somewhat long intervals, and presided over by one of the judges of the land, for this purpose called Chief Justice in Eyre. There were the usual Forest officials, over whom was the Lord Warden and hereditary officers, whose charge it was to maintain the Forest unimpaired for the King's pleasure.

No Court of Justice had been held in Waltham Forest since 1670; in 1870 only a single verderer survived, without the power of enforcing any rights; and the ownership of the manors changed hands many times.

Epping Forest alone was divided between no fewer than nineteen distinct manors; Hainault Forest between seven manors. All were subject to the rights of the Crown under the Forest laws to forbid enclosures; and the commoners had in many cases, and the lords of the manor also, the right of lopping and pollarding the trees in the wastes at stated intervals for the supply of wood for fuel for their houses.

In the Manor of Loughton the inhabitants generally claimed and exercised the custom and right of lopping trees for firewood. It was this right which formed the bone of contention which was fought for between various dogs, and eventually seized by the biggest—the Corporation of London. The right to lop the trees carried the right of entry, and the freedom of the open land.

Since 1851 the game of grab had been going on, and various lords of the manor, taking advantage of the blunder of some one in a Government Department, enclosed some three thousand acres. The largest of these operations was that in the Manor of Loughton, the lord of which was Mr. Maitland, who was also rector of the parish. According to the Right Hon. G. Shaw Lefevre, he enclosed in one group the whole of the waste of the Forest within his manor, consisting of about thirteen hundred acres, with the exception of a trifling

allotment of about nine acres, which he left "for the recreation of the villagers." How kind! He attempted, in fact, a general enclosure without an Act of Parliament. He allotted a portion of the land in extinguishment of the rights of those tenants of his manor whom he admitted to be entitled to compensation, and bought up others for money. Having, as he believed, settled with all of them, he believed himself entitled to enclose his manor.

This was where old Willingale stepped in. The inhabitants of Loughton had from time immemorial enjoyed the right of lopping the trees for firewood during the winter months; but by ancient custom it was conditional on their beginning to lop the trees as the clock struck the hour of midnight on 10th November, the eve of St. Martin's Day. The inhabitants were wont to meet for that purpose at Staples Hill, within the Forest, where, after lighting a fire and celebrating the occasion by draughts of beer, they lopped from twelve till two o'clock and returned to their homes. The branches, according to custom, could not be faggoted in the Forest; they were made into heaps six feet high, and then drawn out of the Forest in sledges. In olden times the first load was drawn out by white horses, and the wood could only be cut for the use of the inhabitants of the parish.

Whatever the origin of this may have been, it was certainly much older than the time of Queen Elizabeth, for the rolls of the manor in the early part of her reign mention the "user" as a custom, and there can be no

OLD OAK, EPPING

manner of doubt that it had been maintained for centuries.

"The story also ran"—I am quoting from Mr. Shaw Lefevre—"that about a century ago the then Lord of the Manor, wishing to extinguish the custom, invited all his parishioners to a banquet on the eve of St. Martin's Day, and plied them plentifully with liquor in the hope that midnight would find them in such a condition that they would be unable to perambulate the Forest so as to maintain their rights. One man, however, kept his head clear of liquor, and stole from the feast at midnight, perambulated the Forest, and exercised his right by lopping some trees, and having done so, returned to the feast, where he found his friends still being plied with spirits; the lord thereupon, angry at the failure of his scheme, bid them begone with many curses. Whether the story be true or not, the tradition as to the necessity for observing the midnight programme on St. Martin's Eve is firmly planted in the minds of the people."

This quaint and picturesque custom of midnight lopping became the pivot of the whole business. After Mr. Maitland's enclosure the day arrived for the annual observation of the custom, and Willingale and his two sons, who had in past years made a living during the winter by lopping wood for their neighbours, went out as usual at midnight, broke in upon the lord's fences, perambulated the Forest, and lopped the trees in accordance with the custom of their forebears. For this act, in vindication of their rights, the three Willingales were summoned by the lord of the manor before the local

justices; and although they protested that they were only asserting their rights, according to the custom, which was outside the jurisdiction of the magistrates, they were convicted of malicious trespass on property, and sent to prison for two months with hard labour. It turned out that one at least of the magistrates had received an allotment of the enclosed land in compensation for his right.

It was after the death of one of Willingale's sons, as already stated, that the indignation of the district was aroused.

The Commons Society, after an ineffectual law case, went in a deputation to the Lord Mayor, introduced by the Right Hon. G. Shaw Lefevre. It appeared that the Corporation owned some land at Ilford which put them in the position to fight the lord of the manor. The Lord Mayor gave a friendly ear to the case, and as a result the City Chamberlain took up the subject with great ardour.

It would be a long and intricate business to follow the details of the fight, interesting though it was both to layman and lawyer. At last a Royal Commission was appointed, and finally an Act passed which gave the Corporation jurisdiction over the Forest. The enclosure fences were thrown down, and Epping Forest became a public playground.

The situation now became ironical.

The Corporation, who had fought so loyally for the right of the people of Loughton to lop their wood, and perform the ancient midnight rites, declared that, in future,

all lopping in Loughton was illegal. Mr. Shaw Lefevre endeavoured to rectify the position by moving in Committee on the Bill in the House of Commons a clause admitting the validity of the custom, and directing the Arbitrator to assess the value of it in compensation to the inhabitants of Loughton. In effect, if the lopping was to cease, its value was not to be lost to the humble inheritors of the privilege.

The Corporation of London opposed this, and were most unwilling to recognize the custom in any way, in spite of the fact that so great an advantage had been derived from the preliminary suit on behalf of this custom by Willingale.

The Corporation mongrel, having secured the bone, had no intention of allowing the Loughton thoroughbred to have so much as a sniff.

The defenders of the public rights were up in arms again, and on the 10th November 1879, the midnight of which, by the Act, was to be the last occasion on which the old custom of perambulating the Forest and lopping the trees should take place, Mr. Lefevre went down to Loughton with Mr. Burney as representatives of the Commons Society, and joined in the demonstration.

The whole population of the district turned out at midnight, to the number of from five to six thousand. They perambulated the manor by torchlight, and then held a meeting previous to commencing the lopping. Mr. Lefevre addressed this midnight meeting in the Forest, and informed the people that it was the last occasion upon which such lopping would be permissible

by law, and promised that the Commons Society should argue the claim before the Arbitrator.

In due time the hearing of the case came on, and the Corporation appeared by Counsel and did their best to resist the claim of the Loughton people, arguing, as Mr. Maitland had done, that the custom could not be enjoyed by so uncertain a body as the inhabitants of a parish.

The Arbitrator brushed aside these quibbles, and decided that the Loughton people were entitled to compensation. He awarded them the sum of £7000, and directed that £1000 be paid to those of the cottagers who actually exercised the right and derived profit from it, and the residue expended in building a village hall in Loughton to be used as a reading-room and a place of meeting for the inhabitants, and to be called the Loppers' Hall.

The "limit" of irony was reached two years later. But the story must be told by Mr. Shaw Lefevre.

"When the foundation stone of this hall was to be laid, it was made the occasion of a popular demonstration at Loughton. With singular infelicity the local managers responsible for it invited the Lord Mayor of London to perform this ceremony, unmindful of the fact that the Corporation of London had done their very utmost to defeat the claim of the inhabitants to any compensation for their rights. The Lord Mayor drove down in state to Loughton.

"The proceedings were opened with a prayer by Mr. Maitland, the rector of the parish, and lord of the manor, who had also done his utmost to enclose the whole of the

EPPING FOREST—NEAR FAIRMEAD

waste of his manor, and to defeat the claim of the inhabitants of Loughton, and who had caused the imprisonment of Willingale and his sons for endeavouring to exercise them! There were those who were of opinion that a white sheet would have been the most appropriate garment for the rector on the occasion! The local manager had at least the good taste not to invite any members of the Commons Society to take part in the proceedings in such company."

It was with some difficulty that the Corporation of London was later induced to give to the widow of old Willingale the paltry pension of five shillings a week.

In his summary of the whole business of the rescue of Epping, Mr. Lefevre pertinently remarks—

"It may be confidently affirmed that never in the past experience of the Law Courts was there a decision by which upwards of 400 persons were compelled to disgorge 3000 acres of land wrongfully enclosed, and by which there was secured for ever an area of double the size for the enjoyment for all time to come of the people of London."

CHAPTER XII

FROM EPPING TO THE NORTH POLE— THE EPPING HUNT

IT would be inaccurate to say that Epping Forest is altogether consecrated to the tripper, but the East End of London pervades it. This is, perhaps, as it should be; but it is a pity that the commoners should have exercised their rights of lopping so freely in the past. The Forest of the present day bears sad evidence of the activity of the axe. Compared with other Royal preserves, the timber is stunted. Nearly all the Forest giants have gone; and those that remain are curiosities, objects of wonderment and special pride, which owe their preservation to the thickets which, at one time, must have hemmed them in.

It has been well said that "thickets are the nurseries of trees," protecting them from the beasts in their slender youth, and hiding them from man until they reach a stature which makes destruction and haulage difficult. The gnarled stumps and bushy tops of the hornbeam show how persistently they must have been trimmed; indeed, this is one of the characteristics of the Forest, a rolling, bushy character not unpleasing, but at the same

time hardly illustrative of Nature in abandon. The shades are close and dark, the ground beneath moist and slippery, and intersected with innumerable ditches and water-courses.

The scenery owes its charm to the undulating nature of the ground; although those who do not know their Essex suppose it to be a flat county. Here we find nothing but declivities, and some of them remarkably sharp. From High Beech, quite the most lovely and popular part of the Forest, there is a view of distant hill and dale unequalled at any point round the metropolis. Across the haze lies the ancient Abbey of Waltham, nestling in a bed of rolling tree-tops. The wind sweeps over the heights, fresh and keen, and we are conscious of being some 343 feet above ocean level, with the salt of the sea on the breeze coming from the wide estuary of the Thames. This is in the more northerly portion, topographically near to Theydon Bois and Loughton.

The area of the Forest is rather like the Isle of Man in shape, but longer and narrower, running north and south. It is intersected by the main coach-road, a fine highway, by which it is best explored. If the visitor approaches from Loughton railway station he is apt to be depressed by the necessary mile or so of semi-respectable squalor and commercial energy in the shape of mineral water depôts in front parlour windows, hideously unfestive tea-gardens, and a monotonous repetition of invitations to take refreshment in tents, backyards, and tin palaces guaranteed "to seat 300."

The local population straggles into the highways

and byways, especially the younger members; and one cannot escape the consciousness of London's greedy commercial tentacles creeping through the boundaries, despite the edict that the rescued territory is dedicated to Nature. Perhaps it would be better to say Nature and humanity. It looks as though it would be a struggle between them.

The broken ginger-beer bottle and the torn newspaper struggle bravely with the flowers of the Forest; and where, for the sake of rusticity, fallen logs and twisted roots have been thoughtfully placed by the controllers to make seats at the foot of trees, they are held captive by strands of wire, either to prevent them running away or to discourage the hilarious holiday-makers essaying Sandow feats.

It must not be supposed from these unfriendly observations that Epping is not worth a visit. The trippers within its boundaries, brought hither by brakes, vans, and donkey barrows, do not penetrate into the lovelier portions for fear of being lost. Approach therefore by the points farthest from London, Theydon Bois or Loughton, and strike away from the main road. There is very little danger of losing the way; and the Forest is so narrow, when traversed from east to west, that a high road can always be struck within a short time. In the morning, when the toilers are busy elsewhere, it is lonely and inviting; and if the wind is in the east, the air is likely to be free of London haze, and the distances enchanting.

One local guide-book makes an amusing, but quite

A CLUSTER OF BEECHES, EPPING

serious plea for the salubrity of the district by triumphantly asserting that a line drawn in a north-easterly direction on the map goes straight to the North Pole, "without passing through any large town or even village of any considerable size, but crosses the German Ocean and the North Sea until the Pole is reached: which is the first land in a direct line after leaving the shores of England. This undoubtedly tends to keep the air in the district fresh and sweet."

How straight those fresh breezes must blow!

It is easy to understand that the men of Essex love their wild woodland, and bitterly resent the haughty indifference of the denizens of the west who disdain to negotiate Liverpool Street Station and a forest of chimney pots before reaching the ancient Royal pleasaunce.

Yet there are some fine woods of noble trees, notably beech, sufficiently distinctive to be points of pilgrimage, such as Monks Wood, Ambesbury Banks, and the woods round High Beech. The timber is very various, and the beech is supposed *not* to be indigenous, but the result of ancient planting,—which seems likely though here and there when one observes the extraordinary distortion of some of them, and the amazing trunk-clusters with a dozen trees rising from a single root.

Towards the north end there are many fine pollarded hornbeams. On the drier soil of Epping some of the finest beeches are to be found, besides oaks and hornbeam, while there is often an underwood of holly. In Theydon Woods fine patches of beech have grown up

in close company, while the more open parts are picturesquely devoted to birch, holly, and heather. At Loughton we come chiefly upon oaks, beeches, and hornbeams. In Monk Wood and High Beech are thick groves of beech which have not been pollarded. Oak and hornbeam are the chief trees on the clay soil of Fairmead Thicket, and the woods in Wanstead consist of elms planted about one hundred and sixty years ago, interspersed with beech and sycamore. The indigenous trees found in the Forest include oak, beech, hornbeam, birch, ash, field maple, and sallow; while the common shrubs are holly, hawthorn, blackthorn, and butcher's broom.

Even the motor-cars shun that long, unlovely eastward drive out of town, which was once the main coach road to Cambridge and the Eastern counties. It is a pity; because, with the aid of a car, the long distances of the Forest main roads can be so easily covered, and all the wilder beauty spots reached in comfort. When a dozen miles or so makes no difference in the journey, Epping can be approached from the North road by way of Enfield, a route which disencumbers the adventure of depressing elements.

The chief blemishes of the Forest are the licensed houses, remnants of old coaching days, which disfigure the high roads, and cater for the humbler populace in garish ways, giving them anchorage from which they often do not attempt to break away until ready to set off for home again. The inns provide the landmarks, and are the rendezvous for turn-outs "that knock 'em in the Old Kent Road," pony traps, and the long lines of

agricultural vehicles lumbering in and out from the metropolitan markets.

The bustling character of the town of Epping in the old days can be understood when it is stated that there were no fewer than twelve stage-coaches passing through to, and eleven from, London daily. All these coaches had their respective inns of call where horses were kept; and in Epping their number could not have been less than two hundred. Added to the coach traffic there was the ordinary posting business; so we can readily understand that the present somnolence is due to the natural change of the times. Motors by the hundred fly through where originally a four-in-hand was welcome; but the cars do not stop. The revival of the roadside inn, which was expected when motor traffic began to stir the dust, has not come to pass.

The Forest has long been famous for its herd of dark-brown fallow deer; and these one-time timid creatures can occasionally be seen crossing the roads, paying little attention to passing motors. The red deer were here from time immemorial till the reign of King George IV; but within living memory the only kind of stag hunt in Essex has been the chase of the carted deer. Extreme timidity is not a distinguishing characteristic of the present herds; they can be oftener seen than can those of the New Forest, and they fear not the blast of the horn—motor or otherwise.

The author was privileged to see the Royal deer and hear the King's horn under peculiar circumstances; but an attempt to photograph the scene was a failure.

A herd was sighted in a thicket adjoining the main road, undisturbed by a passing victoria, and a wild attempt to readjust a camera-shutter for a snapshot consumed valuable time; then the low bay of a melancholy horn (motor) announced the swift approach of a big car. The moment was gone; the herd bounded across the road — none too hurriedly — and the big dark motor boomed by. The car created more interest than the deer, and two gasping, perspiring, palpitating boys on bicycles giving chase explained the reason in breathless accents.

"The King, the King!"

It was the King's horn indeed—but wound by the chauffeur. The late King was no stranger to Epping in these later days of travel by road, and he saw the deer under conditions unknown to his predecessors, but perhaps not more luxuriously than Elizabeth at Chingford.

The hunt has long since been appropriated by the commoners; and in the latter part of the eighteenth century we find Epping with a pack of staghounds established at Wanstead House by Earl Tylney, the Ranger of his day. It was about this time that the famous Easter Monday Hunt was established, afterwards to become a great Cockney carnival, degenerating into the Easter Hunt satirized by Tom Hood in his poem of "The Epping Hunt."

It has frequently been asserted that this Easter Hunt was held in exercise of the alleged right of the Mayor and Corporation of London to hunt in Epping

A POOL, EPPING FOREST

Forest, because it was known that from remotest times the Corporation possessed an officer called the Common Hunt, who, according to Stow, was entrusted with the care of the pack of deep-mouthed hounds belonging to the Mayor and Corporation. But according to Dr. Cox the hunting rights of the City seem to have been limited to parts of the Chilterns, and not to have extended to Epping at all.

On the other hand, a less distinguished writer, but one evidently speaking with knowledge, Mr. C. W. B. Burdett, in his *Rambles in Epping Forest and Beyond*, declares that—

"In the early part of the last century the City of London supported and patronised a very extensive establishment, and erected a house, which they rebuilt, and also maintained a large kennel for the hounds. The Hunt was originally founded by the granting of a charter by King Henry I, and confirmed by succeeding monarchs, as an institution worthy of Royal support and patronage. The occasion at one time was regularly attended by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen in all the pomp and circumstance of their civic state, but the practice soon fell into disuse.

"There are other accounts which recorded the origin of the Hunt in the reign of Henry III, and in *Tait's Magazine* for 1850 a humorist gives a very different account. He says that until Richard Cœur de Lion's days the custom was for Londoners to hunt a Jew through the streets on Easter Monday, and that the Epping Hunt was substituted because Isaac of Cordova

would not grant the King a loan until the hunting of Jews was stopped.

"The Hunt soon degenerated into a drunken revel with a farcical unkennelling of an imprisoned stag for the sport of London Cockneys. Up to 1853 the Bald Faced Stag was the centre for the meet, which was transferred to the Roebuck, Buckhurst Hill, in that year, and finally carried on by a motley rabble at the Robin Hood, at High Beech. It was, however, suppressed by the police in 1882, just prior to the Forest being handed over to the custodianship of the Corporation of London."

Tom Hood's description of the Epping Hunt will probably remain for all time as a historic as well as a humorous document. It is one of the best examples of his literary carpentry. He is not extensively read nowadays, although his respected place on our fathers' bookshelves has saved him from joining the minor poets. His wit was so brilliant, prolific, and seemingly spontaneous; but his ideas leaped at the suggestion of words, rather than words at the suggestion of ideas; an antiquated form of effort that has produced the modern word "wheeze," an expressive and illuminating term. His punning mantle has fallen in our day on Mr. George R. Sims; and some are unkind enough to hope that he will wear it out beyond all possibility of a further descent. (Yet where in all England is there a jester like Dagonet, who can produce one witty joke a week year in year out, with tireless fecundity?)

The verses of Tom Hood's satire, pressed into service here, are those with a detailed descriptive value german to our subject; and they give a very fair picture of the social status of the Cockney stag-hunting carnival in the poet's time.

They deal with the adventures of Mr. Cheesemonger Huggings, a second John Gilpin, who "slapped his leather thigh," and sang the burden of the song "This day a stag must die." He sets out on a sorry nag across the Bridge of Lea :—

"Thence slowly on through Leytonstone,
Past many a Quaker's box—
No Friends to hunters after deer,
Though followers of a *Fox*.

And many a score behind—before—
The self-same route inclined;
And, minded all to march one way,
Made one great march of mind.

Gentle and simple, he and she,
And swell, and blood and prig;
And some had carts, and some a chaise,
According to their gig.

Some long-eared jacks, some knacker's hacks
(However odd it sounds),
Let out that day to hunt, instead
Of going to the hounds!

All sorts of vehicles and vans,
Bad, middling, and the smart;
Here rolled along the gay barouche,
And there a dirty cart!

And lo! a cart that held a squad
Of costermonger line;
With one poor hack, like Pegasus,
That slaved for all the Nine!

Yet marvel not at any load
That any horse might drag;
When all, that morn, at once were drawn
Together by a stag.

Butchers on backs of butchers' hacks
That *shambled* to and fro!
Bakers intent upon a buck,
Neglectful of the *dough!*

Change Alley Bears to speculate,
As usual for a fall;
And green and scarlet runners, such
As never climbed a wall!

Now Huggins from his saddle rose,
And in the stirrup stood;
And lo! a little cart that came
Hard by a little wood.

In shape like half a hearse—though not
For corpses in the least;
For this contained the *deer alive*,
And not the *dear deceased!*

And now began a sudden stir,
And then a sudden shout,
The prison doors were opened wide,
And Robin bounded out!

His antlered head shone blue and red,
Bedecked with ribbons fine;
Like other bucks that come to 'list
The hawbucks in the line.

Some lost their stirrups, some their whips,
Some had no caps to show:
But few, like Charles at Charing Cross,
Rode on in *Statue quo.*

'O dear! O dear!' now might you hear,
'I've surely broke a bone;'
'My head is sore'—with many more
Such speeches from the *Thrown.*

Away, away! he scudded like
A ship before the gale;
Now flew to *h*ills *we* know not of,
Now, nun-like, took the vale.

But even those that galloped on
Were fewer every minute;
The field kept getting more select,
Each thicket served to thin it.

. . . . . .

When thus forlorn, a merry horn
Struck up without the door—
The mounted mob were all returned;
The Epping Hunt was o'er!

And many a horse was taken out
Of saddle and of shaft;
And men, by dint of drink, became
The only '*beasts of draught*.'

For now began a harder run,
Of wine, and gin, and beer;
And overtaken men discussed
The overtaken deer."

Tom Hood himself lived in the Forest, or near it, in the district now known as Wanstead Flats. Lake House, his residence, is still embowered with his beloved trees. It was here that he wrote his novel *Tilney Hall*, that had a considerable vogue, the scenes of which were laid in the neighbourhood. Lake House, originally part of the historic Wanstead House near by, has fallen upon evil days; but it was once a charming place. The poet's son, speaking of it, says: "There was a beautiful chimney-piece carved in fruit and flowers by Grinling Gibbons, and the ceiling bore traces of painting. Several quaint, Watteau-like pictures were panelled on the walls, but it was in a shocking state of repair. In the twilight the

rats used to come and peep out of the holes in the wainscot. . . . From the windows one could catch lovely glimpses of forest scenery, especially one fine aspen avenue."

The rabble on their way to the Hunt often passed the poet's door.

EPPING FOREST—THE TRENCH AT AMBRESBURY BANKS WHERE BOADICEA IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE PITCHED HER LAST CAMP

CHAPTER XIII

SHOOTING STAGS IN ESSEX—TURPIN AND THE WILD BRAKES

A FRESH chapter in the lives of the Royal Herds, and a rather ludicrous one, began when the Corporation of London took over the management of the Forest. It is recorded here in no spirit of derision, or criticism, but as a fragment of history cherished locally.

In compounding with the lords of the manor at the time of the surrender, a condition was made that certain fat bucks should be distributed to them yearly by the new controllers, according to ancient custom. This necessitated, in the first two or three years, an attack upon evasive herds, which resulted in some wild shooting and not a little cruelty. The Press of London, prompted by local enemies, spoke rather strongly about the way in which the deer were being slaughtered.

Mutilated and decaying bodies of wounded deer were found in various portions of the Forest; and though it was recognized that the herd must be kept down, and the legal conditions fulfilled, it was urged that more

humane methods should be employed in securing the annual toll of fat bucks.

The *Standard*, as representing public feeling on this question of forest shooting, said: "The shooting or trapping creatures of any kind in the forest ought not to be necessary. Nature keeps the balance of these things far more effectively than the gamekeeper's gun, which, moreover, scares the more timid of them from the very spot where they ought most especially to be encouraged. Still less excusable is the turning loose of a horde of unskilled and indiscriminating men with guns, to let fly wildly in all directions, against the plainest words and most stringent provisions of the By-laws, and even to the danger of the public. Worst of all is the barbarity with which the shooting is said to be carried on, no care being taken to follow or pick up wounded bird or beast, but the wretched victim—even the deer—left to creep away and die in lingering agony."

Punch took up the cry, and the following letter from "A Forest Fawn" appeared, headed:—

"A Cry from Epping Forest

"I want to thank you, good Mr. Punch, for what you have said on our behalf. Things have lately gone very hard with us. We felt that they were really beyond a joke.

"For hundreds and hundreds of years we fallow Deer have had free range of Epping Forest. When

the ancient Britons were mere beginners we were here. Since time was, the Forest has been 'fallow' ground. What is happening to us now no Fallow can understand! Dear Mr. Punch, we are not being killed, that would be merciful, and we are but venison. At the civic 'hunts' you have heard about we are literally tortured to death. Does the thing your City calls its Corporation possess bowels of Compassion? If it is not quite callous to the agony inflicted in its name, it will stop, once and for ever, the ghastly 'sport' of the past season.

"My Sire lies rotting in the Forest. Flying one morning last September before a band of yelling beaters, one of his legs was smashed below the knee by a Cockney 'sportsman's' chance shot. My lamed Sire made for a near brook, flowing through a deep hollow in the wood. Here at night we came to him. The ball had smashed the bone to splinters. At first he crept from place to place along the brook, leaving a track of blood. Then, as the wounds grew worse, he lay in the deepest water, and died on the fifth day. Some nights after this, when we came, we found his body. I wish some City 'Buck' could be made to endure a tithe of my Sire's suffering.

"A Forest Fawn"

In the third edition to one of the early Guide-Books, by Mr. Percy Lindsay, published in 1886–7, written in a spirited and highly entertaining fashion, which the authors of later books of the same sort might well copy, there is an account from a "correspondent" which

describes what he styles "The New Hunt in Epping Forest."

"The new 'Hunt' differs from the Old Epping Hunt. Instead of forming the delight of the many, it is a privilege for the few. The date is kept secret. Invitations are sent out at the last moment to favoured friends. The 'Hunt' begins early—generally about five o'clock. The eager sportsmen, some with the latest thing in rifles, others wondering how on earth they are to shoot should a deer come their way, are posted along an open glade, on the edge of a road, and are told to wait. Soon the shouts and screams of the beaters are heard coming up the wind or down, for this is a minor point in Civic hunting. In the cold morning mist, with no other sound than the flutter and low twitterings of the scared birds, the sudden dismal and blood-curdling beaters' howls try the novice's nerves. The story goes that one morning last August the son of a City gentleman, posted along at the far end of the line, was so terror-stricken by what seemed the angry roaring of the coming deer, that he fled in horror down the line, and was all but shot by another youth, who took him in the haze for a bounding buck. Another story current among members of the Essex Field Club is, that a bolder but too ardent sportsman bagged a fine Forest buck, which on inspection proved a hapless donkey, whose owner's feelings and tongue could be quieted only by a generous compensation.

"For the first hour or two of 'the hunt' the sportsmen are on the *qui vive* in spite of the raw chill each

WILLOWS, EPPING

novice feels mounting from his soles upwards. As he is moved from drive to drive, and placed alone in the line, the excitement wanes, and he calls inquiringly to his nearest neighbour whether a railway station, or a road leading anywhere, happens to be handy? If the woods round Chingford prove blank, a move is made by Fairmead towards Loughton. A favourite spot for posting the guns at Loughton is along a broad Ride, running across the Forest, known as the 'Clay Road.' A shot is usually got here at twenty yards, but the crash and the rush of the driven deer are too much for the green sportsmen in the line, and their bullets miss, or merely maim. As no dogs or hounds are taken to follow up a buck, who may be foolish enough to get in the way of these chance bullets, he is permitted to get clear away, and recover from his hurt, or die a lingering death in a Forest ditch.

"From Loughton, if a day is to be made of it, the driving goes on through Monk Woods to the Old Road leading to the Wake Arms, where a halt is made for refreshments. Here, after soda and brandy, pipes are lighted, and are sometimes kept lighted, to the despair of any sportsman who chances to be present, through the rest of the Hunt. 'It's dull work, by Jove, standing here all day behind confounded trees, and my smoke will no more hurt a deer than your gun,' is the playful reply one probably receives if protesting.

"From the Wake Arms, after beating Hangboy Slade and The Ditches, the young Beech and Birch woods of Theydon are taken, where a good buck or

two could be potted any morning by capable gunners without the noisy assistance of bands of beaters. A fine buck was shot here last August, but the sportsman, unconscious that he had hit anything, allowed it to get clear away. The buck was eventually found some ten days after, dead and decaying, in Theydon Brook.

"From Theydon Woods the driving goes on through Epping Thicks to the northern top of the Forest. Then turning about the Waltham edge, is taken down through St. Thomas's quarters, a favourite cover, to Woodridden Hill, where the hunt ends.

"Last season's 'kill'—not counting possible casualties among sportsmen or excursionists—was two bucks shot outright, and three found dead, and decomposed, in the Forest,—the victims of random shooting and bad system. In these hunts the number of guns out are rarely less than half a dozen, and there are about à dozen 'hunts' in all. Sometimes the 'shooting' went on from five in the morning till three in the afternoon."

These abuses soon cured themselves. The Corporation of London has always shown itself to be actuated by a fine public spirit in its work connected with open spaces, but cannot always do the right thing "first time." It was impossible to please everybody. Naturalist Societies and Field Clubs had their say, abuses were rectified, and now in the twentieth century we find the Forest, if not a thing of beauty in the eyes of those who would like to see natural decay go on unchecked side by side with primeval growth, at any rate a joy for ever.

. . . . . .

With a great many people Epping Forest has come to be regarded as the Forest of the Poor, but this is quite a mistake. A large and rich population has gradually settled round it. The tripper and excursionist, as already explained, naturally seek the Forest at the nearest point by road or rail, leaving by far the most beautiful portions in the possession of the four-footed creatures, and the more adventurous lovers of Nature, who do not fear to plunge into thickets.

There are a variety of spots rich in historical interest, such as Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, partly used as a museum. Tradition ascribes to her the feat of riding a horse up the staircase of this Lodge; and it is a curious fact that the first and second floors appear to have been originally used as a sort of grand stand with open sides. The Queen's method of hunting evidently bore more resemblance to a deer drive in the Highlands of Scotland, as described in *Waverley*, than to a stag hunt of the present and earlier days; for we are told that in her time the grand old style of hunting *at force* gave place to indolent methods of driving the deer to the "stands" from which the Queen and her courtiers fired as the quarry sped by.

The Chingford Lodge is identified by Mr. W. C. Waller as the "great Standinge" referred to in an official report of 1589, from which it is surmised the shooting took place from the upper floors.

The staircase of the other hunting lodge, now the Forest Hotel, Chingford, also claims the distinction of the Queen's ride, and the feat of horsemanship was

emulated some twenty years ago by a visitor, for a wager. In the museum portion it was an easy matter—no feat at all.

The Abbey of the Holy Cross at Waltham, with which the history of the Forest is interwoven, is supposed to be the burial-place of Harold after the battle of Hastings. The tomb was within the chancel, but the destruction of this part of the building left it in the open air, and the stone which marked the spot was removed. It is said that in the reign of Queen Elizabeth a gardener digging came upon the stone coffin itself, which, being opened, revealed bones which crumbled to dust when exposed to the air.

A less reputable association of the district is that of Dick Turpin, the highwayman who did *not* ride to York. The Forest was the scene of some of his worst exploits. Tradition in this case has no need to rely on romance. The records are well authenticated, and many of his haunts are known to the grandsires of Epping. The rascal Dick was no Robin Hood, although he haunted the fastnesses of the King. The people suffered from him and his gang at Epping, where they confessed him a blackguard of the worst type.

Of course he has his local cave: every noted robber has, from Robin Hood down. Turpin—who was executed in 1739—and his associate, Tom King, took up their quarters in one between Loughton Road and King's Oak Road, large enough to receive both them and their horses, and from which they could see what

MONKS WOOD, EPPING

passengers went by either road, and issue forth to play their game of stand and deliver.

The prevalence of dense thicket, still a characteristic of the Forest, was a feature of the main coach road as late as 1728. There is preserved at the British Museum an old poem of that date which describes rather vividly the dangers to which travellers to Cambridge were subjected from highwaymen and the lesser footpads who infested the wastes. Space does not permit of the extract being given in its entirety, a few verses only are selected.

A traveller to Trinity College is the supposed author, and his effusion is in the form of a rhyming letter to a friend, which runs as follows :—

"This comes to tell you how in Epping Hundred
Last *Wednesday* morning I was robbed and plunder'd;
Forgive the Muse, who sings what, I suppose,
Fame has already trumpeted in Prose;
But *Fame's* a lying jade. . . .

On *Tuesday* night, you know with how much sorrow
I bid the club farewell—I go To-morrow—
To-morrow came, and so accordingly
Unto the place of Rendezvous went I.
Bull was the House, and Bishopsgate the street,
The coach as full as it would cram; to wit,
Two fellow-commoners *De Aula* Trin,
And eke an honest Bricklayer of Lynn,
And eke two *Norfolk* Dames, his Wife and Cousin,
And eke my Worship's self made half a dozen.

Now then, as Fortune had contriv'd our way
Thro' the wild brakes of Epping Forest lay:
With travellers and Trunks a hugeous Load
We hagg'd along the solitary road.

Where nought but Thickets within Thickets grew;
No house, nor Barn to cheer the wandering view,
Nor lab'ring Hind, nor Shepherd did appear,
Nor Sportsman with his Dog or Gun was there;
A dreary landscape, bushy and forlorn,
Where Rogues start up like Mushrooms in a Morn.

However, since we, none of us, had yet
Such Rogues, but in a Sessions Paper, met,
We jok'd on Fear; tho' as we passed along
Robbing was still the burden of the Song.
With untry'd Courage bravely we repell'd,
The rude Attacks of Dogs—not yet beheld,
With val'rous talk still battling, till at last
We thought all Danger was as good as past.
Says one, too soon alas! now let him come,
Full at his head I'll fling this Bottle of Rum. . . ."

At this point a highwayman climbs up behind the coach and suddenly presents a pistol at the head of the owner of the rum—

"The Youth who flung the Bottle at the Knave
Before he came, now thought it best to wave
Such Resolution, and preserve the Liquor,
Since a round Guinea might be thrown much quicker;
So with impetuous haste he flung him that.

My heart—for Truth I always must confess—
Did sink—an Inch exactly—more or less
With both my Eyes I viewed the Thief's Approach;
And read the Case of Pistol *versus* Coach.
A woful Case which I had oft heard quoted
But ne'er before in all my Practice noted.

So when the Lawyers brought in their Report,
Guinea per Christian to be paid in Court,
Well off, thinks I, with this same ——
If he prefers his Action for me no more."

The thieves were paid, and made off. After much

rhetoric the author finishes with some advice to his friend at Trinity College :—

> ". . . when e'er thou art enlarging
> On Epping Forest, note this in the Margin,
> Let Cambridge Scholars that are not quite bare
> Shun the dishonest Track, and ride thro' *Ware*."

. . . . . .

The Forest of Hainault, lying farther north than Epping, and east of the river Roding, was once part of the Forest of Essex, and rich in quaint associations. It is now no more, at least so far as its ancient character is concerned. In 1851 the Crown, being owners of the manorial as well as the sporting rights, directed that the "Waste" of Hainault should be sold, and the money invested for public utility. Accordingly a contract was made with an owner of steam ploughs, who attached his anchors to the soil, and dragged up by the roots all the old oaks, including that of Fairlop of ancient memory. In six weeks the Forest of Hainault was no more.

The Fairlop Oak was the most celebrated tree that ever grew in the county of Essex. It stood about one mile from Barkingside, and was estimated (by tradition) to be of the age of a thousand years. Beneath its boughs an annual fair was held in July, on the first Friday. Late in the eighteenth century it was described by Gilpin as being: "Still a noble tree, though it has suffered greatly from the depredations of time. It boasted a fluted stem 36 feet in circumference, it divided into eleven vast arms; yet not in the horizontal manner of an oak, but rather in that of a beech. Beneath its

shade, which overspread an area of 300 feet in circuit, an annual fair has long been held on the 2nd of July ; and no booth is suffered to be erected beyond the extent of its boughs."

The Fair had its origin in a Mr. Day, a block and pump maker in the parish of St. John, Wapping, who had a small estate near Fairlop Oak, being in the habit of annually inviting some of his friends to dine with him on beans and bacon within the shade of the tree.

A few years before Mr. Day died (in 1767, at eighty-four years of age) his favourite oak lost a large limb, which he acquired and had made into a coffin for himself.

Despite endeavours to preserve the tree it gradually became more and more decayed. It was blown down in 1820, part of it being made into a carved pulpit for St. Pancras Church, London, while the remains, left standing, were cut down and burned owing to the character of the Fair having become exceedingly disreputable, and the amount of damage done every year to the surrounding trees.

The site of Hainault Forest has fortunately been reclaimed, and is now replanted and dedicated to the public under the direction of the London County Council.

There is another fine remnant of ancient forest at Hatfield Broadoak, sometimes called Hatfield Forest, near Bishops Stortford. It is chiefly remarkable for its magnificent pollarded hornbeams. These, however, are of greater interest to the students of forestry than to the lover of the picturesque.

FOREST OF DEAN—THE CASTLE OF ST. BRIAVELS

V. THE FOREST OF DEAN

CHAPTER XIV

A FOREST OF OAK AND IRON

THE way to the Forest of Dean from London is by the usual express routes of civilization as far as Gloucester; thence by tedious serpentine lines, behind leisurely engines panting up distressing slopes, into a land at once startlingly beautiful but tinged with a little of that melancholy which hilly country frequently arouses in the breast of the plainsman.

The exact location of the Forest is in that part of Gloucestershire bounded by the rivers Severn and Wye, two of our fairest water-ways, rich in natural beauty and historical interest. The journey is long, but not uninteresting; indeed there is hardly any railway dawdle to compare in surprise and charm with the line from Gloucester through Ross, past Symond's Yat to Monmouth and Coleford, following the winding course of the river Wye through precipitous vales and towering, rocky hills.

The conditions of life here are different from any

other part of the country; and since the Domesday the foresters of Dean have enjoyed peculiar privileges. Indeed their written history goes back farther than that, for under the Confessor three thanes had held land in Dene free of geld by the service of guarding the Forest. Even at that early period assarts had been made, and the iron forges had begun to thin the brushwood if not the timber; and the Saxons were but following in the footsteps of the Romans, who have left substantial evidences of their occupation—matter to be dealt with later.

It is supposed that the Druids offered up their sacrifices on Staunton Hill, in the shadow of the Buckstone (a huge rock, so called from its fancied resemblance to the animal when viewed from distant spots like Ross, nine miles off). So that there is no lack of antiquity in anything except the trees, which are largely the result of modern plantation.

In 1787 the Forest carried a mixed crop of oak and beech, in the proportion of two beeches to one oak, but most of this was felled early in last century, so that by 1849 no more than 500 acres remained which carried old timber; this, too, has now disappeared, and hardly any of the oaks, which are now spread over some 11,000 acres, exceed a hundred years in age.

The name Dean is of doubtful origin, derived either from its proximity to Michaeldean of the Doomsday Book, or from Dene or Dean, which in the Saxon signified a dale or glen. A fanciful historian has suggested that by cutting off a syllable it was derived from Arden, which word the Gauls or Britons seem to

have used for a wood, since two very great forests, the one in Belgium, the other in Warwickshire, were called by the name of Arden. So that this would be the real Forest of Arden. That the Romans occupied the district and worked the iron mines in the Forest is evident by discoveries made at recent excavations—as recent, that is, as 1780—when Mr. Wyrrall investigated the state of the Forest for the Crown to make a report, and he declared that—

"Coins, fibulæ, and other things known to be in use with the people (the Romans) have been frequently found in the beds of cinders at certain places; this has occurred particularly at the village of Whitchurch, between Ross and Monmouth, where large stacks of cinders have been found, and some of them so deep in the earth, eight or ten feet under the surface, as to demonstrate without other proof that they must have lain there for ages. The present writer has had opportunity of seeing many of these coins and fibulæ, etc., but especially one coin of Trajan which he remembers to be surprisingly perfect and fresh, considering the length of time it must have been in the ground. Another instance occurs to his recollection of a little image of brass about four inches long which was found in the cinders at the same place, being a very elegant female figure, in dancing attitude, and evidently an antique by the drapery."

Later evidence of Roman occupation was discovered at Crabtree Hill in August 1839 by an astonished wight, who no doubt received the shock of his life when, on

removing a stone from one of several heaps lying near the surface, he found about twenty-five Roman coins buried below.

One can imagine his ejaculations of delight and feverish excitement on learning the value of the find, and see him hurrying off with the amazing news. But what was that day's excitement compared to the next, when, in another heap, about fifty yards away, he found a broken jar, or urn of baked clay, and four or five hundred coins lying in it. A veritable Tom Tiddler's Ground!

The coins were for the most part those of the time of Claudius II., Gallienus, and Victorinus. The spot was on rather high ground, not a hill however, or commanding point. Some of the stones seemed scorched, as if the building of which they had once formed a part had been destroyed by fire—possibly after a descent upon it by barbarians, when the Romans were withdrawn from the district.

The Forest of Dean has played many parts in our country's history, not the least important of which was the provision of oaks for the Navy; but that was in later years. In the days of the Normans it was a Royal forest. Early in his reign William the Conqueror made acquaintance with it, for he was hunting here, in 1069, when he received news of a rising in the north. After his death a further extension of the area held under Forest laws was determined on, as much from the necessity of raising revenue as by considerations of sport; for this was a valuable tract of Crown Property.

FOREST OF DEAN—ON THE TOP OF THE ROMAN SCOWLES, GENERALLY KNOWN AS THE DEVIL'S CHAPEL

On the hills were the sturdy oaks to give shelter to the nimble deer; below, coal and iron.

Its first contribution to the Navy was in the Conqueror's time, and consisted of iron, not wood.

This was the beginning; and ever since, the history of the Royal Navy and the history of the Forest of Dean have been interwoven.

Yet the Forest story, strangely enough, is one of mining rather than forestry; for the valuable ore below the soil was of especial worth because of the fuel, to feed the forges, growing on the spot. At first the forges were "perambulating," and moved from place to place, according to the timber available—generally old and decayed trees—although there was not lacking evidence that the decay and death of fine oaks was often surreptitiously expedited. It soon became necessary to regulate these forges, and charters were demanded and granted. Timber was allowed for mining below and above ground, and only "Such Persons as were born and abiding in the Forest" were permitted to "visit" the mines, in working which the distance of a stone's-throw was always to be kept between the claims; and the property in them might be bequeathed. This was after the forges had ceased to perambulate.

Just as there were Forest Courts elsewhere, so there were mine courts here to settle the disputes of the industry; and three "hands," or witnesses, were required for certain convictions, and the oath was taken with a stick of holly held in the hand.

The Abbot of Flaxley derived a part of his revenue from the mining industry, for Henry II granted to the Abbey (founded 1140) the right to have two forges of iron in the Forest, one stationary and the other itinerant. For feeding the forges the allowance was two dry or dead trees every week. In 1229 the Abbot was ordered to confine his itinerant forge to the thorn thickets on the confines of the Forest, on account of the great consumption of wood. So much difficulty thereupon arose from the Abbot's insistence on his chartered rights to two forges, that in 1244 the Crown compromised the matter by the handsome grant of 872 acres of woodland in exchange for the charter's surrender.

In 1282 there were found to be no fewer than seventy-two of the itinerant, or movable, forges within the Forest, and the Crown received for licensing them seven shillings each year.

During the reign of Henry III considerable income was derived by the Crown, not only from fees paid by the owners of the iron forges—of these there were at the time twenty-six for the whole Forest, a number trebled by the early years of Edward I—within the Forest, but from the leasing of mines of coal and iron. Besides there were apparently mines in the King's hands, and a Royal forge returned as worth £50; but as to this last, an inquiry was held, and the jurors were asked to determine how much wood had to be furnished to keep the forge at work, and what relation the value of the timber granted bore to the issue of the forge. The verdict returned was that each week two, and

sometimes three, oaks were required, and that the value of the timber granted much exceeded the profits and issues of the forge.

In the old records there is also an entry of one mark for nuts and chestnuts which reminds us of the famous wood of sweet chestnuts within the Forest. (The tithe of these chestnuts had been granted by Henry Plantagenet to Flaxley. The original site of the Abbey was known as Castiard, probably from the abundance of chestnut trees.) A wood of Spanish sweet chestnuts was a great rarity in England, and evidently much prized. The vert presentments of one of the eyres at that time show that the chestnut tree, from its scarcity, was about three times the value of the oak, namely eight shillings a tree.

On 20th August 1278 the Constable of St. Briavels was ordered to allow the King's huntsmen to take one hundred boars in the Forest of Dean, which were to be salted and delivered in barrels at Westminster by the quindene of the Michaelmas following. Wild boars were found in plenty in the Forest in the time of John and Henry III; and wolves were also troublesome in the winter months.

This West Country resort of the hunting kings provided not only the wild boar, but iron and venison; and as far back as the Conqueror we find it called upon to make its first contribution to the Navy. Not oaks, as in after times, but thirty-six icres of iron yearly, each of which comprised ten bars made at their forges (six in number) wherewith to furnish

his fleet with nails. This was a toll on the citizens of Gloucester, who got their icres from the forges in the Forest, by which the town was amply supplied at that time.

This Royal Forest was not a mere pleasure resort, it played various parts in the policy of the country. Besides supplying wood and iron for the Navy, in times of stress good bowmen accustomed to hunt the stag, and sappers and miners familiar with the use of the pick and spade, were in demand by the kings for their wars.

The Forest boasted the fine fortress Castle of St. Briavels, the Constable of which was also Keeper of the Forest. In 1510 he was commanded to select one hundred archers and twelve miners; and later writs were addressed to the sheriff of Gloucester, directing that out of fifty men to be chosen from the county thè larger number should be from the Forest of Dean, and urging expedition in sending them. Again the Keeper of St. Briavels is directed to bring two hundred men to Northallerton.

St. Briavels Castle is standing at the present time, but is in private occupation. It rests upon the shoulder of a hill, near Bream, and from its windows commands a grand valley prospect. Except for the growth of surrounding trees, and the old houses nestling round it, it differs very little in appearance from some pictures made of it two hundred years ago. Ancient courts were held here; and it served for a long time as the Forest prison. It now lacks a moat, for the water has been

MINERS SHANTIES, FOREST OF DEAN

drained from sanitary considerations, but the walls, which still stand, are in many instances nine feet thick. It is built of the local red sandstone, and was erected in the reign of Henry I by Milo FitzWalter, Earl of Hereford, to check the inroads of the Welsh and uphold the authority of the Norman kings in this region. Fitz-Walter appears to have been the first Constable of St. Briavels, and Warden of the Forest of Dean. King John visited it on the 15th of November 1207, and upon four subsequent occasions.

At its gates stands the church; and in the graveyard lie the memorials of the inhabitants, many of them dating back two hundred years, and recording the average ages of the St. Briavels people of that period as between seventy and eighty years—a tribute to the salubrity of the neighbourhood. The little hamlet round the castle is sleepy and old; it is out of the world; more so, perhaps, than any portion of the old Forest area.

Notwithstanding their bravery as soldiers, the inhabitants of the Forest of Dean had an evil reputation in the time of Henry VI. The traders of Tewkesbury made complaints in 1429 that their boats and trows, conveying all manner of merchandise down the Severn to Bristol—

"Had been stopped on the coast of the forest by a great multitude of the common people dwelling thereabout, who seized their vessels, carried away the corn, threatened their lives if they resisted, and forbade any complaints being made on their coming that way again."

The petition caused letters of Privy Seal to be proclaimed in those parts, to the effect that—

"No man of the forest should be so hardy as to enquiet or disturb the people passing the said river with merchandise upon pain of treason." But the historians record that: "The said trespassers came to the said river with greater routs and riots than ever they did before, there despoiling at divers times eight trows of wheat, rye, flour, and divers other goods and chattels, and the men of the same cast overboard, and divers of them drowned, and the hawsers of the same trows cut away, and mainstrung the owners of the said goods, who should not be so hardy as to cause any manner of victuals to be carried any more by the same stream, much or little, for lord or lady, as they would hew their boats all to pieces if they did so."

A description of the old stationary forges is given at a later date in the *Booke of the Forest of Dean Iron Work Surveye*, dated 1635—

"The stone body of the furnace now adopted was usually about twenty-two feet square, the blast being kept up by a waterwheel not less than twenty-two feet in diameter, acting upon two pairs of bellows measuring eighteen feet four, and kept in blast for several months together."

Steam has since superseded the water power, and even the little coal mines, worked by two or three free miners in partnership, or by a single family, use small portable engines for hoisting the cages. The early miners worked the outcrop of the coal where it appeared

on the surface and the sides of the hills; but as the seams became exhausted they naturally followed them deeper and deeper.

The mining, which had gone on uninterruptedly for some fifteen centuries, was at last brought to a standstill by the Civil War, in which the men of Gloucestershire gave a good account of themselves; and a great deal has been written of the episodes of the struggle in the West Country.

In the Forest of Dean things were stirring with a vengeance. Not only with regard to the Stuart dynasty, but the fate of the Forest itself. Its sale to, and threatened extinction by, Sir John Winter formed a troubled chapter in its history.

Charles attempted, in this forest as in the others, to dispose of the Crown interests, and actually sold the Forest of Dean to Sir John Winter, one of his staunch adherents. The price paid was £106,000, and fee farm rent of £1950, 12s. 8d. Sir John at once began to enclose land which had been open for centuries, and to cut down the wood at a prodigious rate. The free miners, whose very living depended upon their ancient freedom of the soil, and the right to lop wood to smelt their iron, were up in arms at once, and we read that: "On March the 21st, 1631, five hundred persons, with two drums, two colours, and a fife, assembled with guns and pikes before the house of Robert Bridges of Bicknor, a servant of Lady Villiers, a lessee, under letters patent, and threw down a hundred perches of newly made ditching, and ended by proclaiming with an 'oh

yes' that if Bridges re-erected it against May Day next they would be ready to do him the like service again. . . . There was evidence that the rioters had considerable sympathy, and even assistance, from the local gentry. . . . Even Peter Simon, the curate of Newland, was suspected of complicity in the riot, and hauled before the Bishop of Winchester on a charge of upholding the doctrine of the equality of all mankind; only to explain painfully that, on the contrary, he had always maintained 'that there was upon kings and princes, God's character, which made their persons sacred as God's anointed.'"

The tenure of persons leasing and purchasing land from the Crown at this time was very insecure. When Civil War broke out, the neighbourhood was thrown into a commotion by the Royalist forces passing through the neighbourhood. A fierce fight took place at Coleford, and the men of the Forest were drawn into the quarrel. But the ultimate triumph of the Commonwealth upset the previous sales by the Crown, and the Forest of Dean was saved for the Navy.

In addition to the mischief done by Sir John Winter's axes, a wild gale wrought havoc in the Forest on 11th October 1634. In hardly more than two hours at least one thousand trees were blown down, and "the rude country people" claimed the wind-fallen trees as their due—and no doubt backed up their claim by vigorous action.

From this time onward the Forest was the forest of the Navy; regular plantations have been made ever

THE NEWLAND OAK, FOREST OF DEAN, COMMONLY REPUTED THE SECOND LARGEST OAK IN BRITAIN

since, and more or less expert attention given to the forestry, so that now the area has ceased almost entirely to be primeval woodland, and is just a series of very beautiful and very flourishing enclosures, belonging to the Government, to which the public have access.

Most of the trees have been planted since Trafalgar, which is not a long time in the life of oaks, and their close-packed formation and innumerable wire fences would make the place monotonous were it not for the straggling area of the Crown land, and the glorious succession of hills and dales which make the valley of the Wye one of the most interesting show-places of the country.

At the present time the Forest is not only an excellent example of Crown management, it is an illustration of an improved system of forestry, and led to the establishment (in January 1904) of an experimental course of instruction for student woodmen, who were to be employed in the Forest during their training. The course extends over two years, and includes instruction in forest botany, forest culture, mensuration and protection of wood. For the first course eight young men from the Forest of Dean and two from Windsor Forest applied to become students, this being as many as employment could be found for at that time; but many more can now be instructed.

Taking the quaint little market-town of Coleford as a beginning, let us investigate this great area of 20,000 acres of woodland. Coleford is the geographical centre; Cinderford, a mining town, is on its boundary; and in

another direction is the ancient keep of St. Briavels, as already described, the original feudal castle whose lords were responsible for the Forest to the King.

The district is well supplied with lines of railway, but not with trains; yet by a diligent study of time-tables you can get "up-along and down-along" very comfortably. All the show-places can be reached; but as the only way to get into the heart of the woodland is by the road, let us set out on foot from Coleford—which lies in a hollow mid-way up a hill, and necessitates a stiff climb in every direction to escape to the open country.

Once on the heights we are up very high indeed. We inquire for the Forest, and the natives, with mild surprise that we should ask such a silly question, give a languid wave of the hand in the air, as who should say, "Here is the world, and the world is the Forest of Dean." To these people the word forest bears its old signification, and is a mere district; the trees are but an incident in the landscape; they are everywhere, and the Crown lands so ubiquitous that no native would venture to say which was and which was not the Forest.

On the hill-top we reach the main road dissecting the real forestry area, and the woods come into view. At first the fringe of whitewashed cottages and heaps of slag, with here and there a primitive wheel and cord to suggest a coal mine, impress us unfavourably. This is surely not a forest; it is a place to shun: smoke and grime will cloud the air; what can one expect here in the way of trees?

Penetrate farther. Most of these heaps of grey slag

are mantled with grass and bracken: there is no smoke, no clouding of the atmosphere. More grey mounds with sheep grazing round them, and at the top of each a square, fenced enclosure that might have been erected to protect a tender tree. On peering over the fence—sometimes it is a wall of grey stone—a horrifying hole dropping down into bottomless darkness startles the stranger.

Disused pits. The coal-seam has been worked and abandoned years before the present miners were born. Now we come upon moss-grown cottages, mere Irish shanties, limp with neglect, with rooftrees dropped upon the ground, and the loose, round wall-stones crumbling and piling themselves in picturesque heaps after the fashion of Nature escaping the thraldom of man. Farther still, and the slag heaps no longer annoy. Nearly every mine seems to be abandoned. Close plantation fences speak of scientific forestry; but soon we strike a pit in labour, easy and without commotion. There is no hurry here; no driving ganger nor screaming engine. A barrow or two, and some thin blue smoke curling up among the trees in a woodland clearing; that is all. We pass on.

Then, without warning, the plantation ends on the left. Some delightfully secluded white cottages are nestling upon the hillside under the trees, and then a soul-stirring panorama of rolling valleys opens out. A brown hill, and then a purple one, then a lilac, then a grey, and a far-distant, cloudy peak of the Malverns, blending with the skies.

Nothing sordid could live here. The great deep pit

in the clearing is dead; its mounds are grass grown. Children and lambs play upon the slag heaps, and the sun sinks in majestic grandeur over some of the finest scenery in England. In the blue haze is the valley of the Wye, with Symond's Yat, and a wide ribbon of silver winding among wooded hills. Tree-tops everywhere, but scarcely billowy—rather like the curling wool on brown sheep's backs, so diminutive are the distant individual trees, so expansive the masses. All the world can be seen from here—at least all that the mind can see and estimate in one sweep of the eye, one supreme moment of visual exaltation. Out of the watery sky stream down great wide shafts of yellow light, which pick out hill-tops in amber and green, and show a few hedgerow veins and smooth, cultivated fields; but it is mostly trees.

Quaint old Monmouth is there in a hollow half hidden, with its houses brown and grey as the hills; and in another direction the breeze comes from the Severn and the sea. We are nearly a thousand feet up on some of the hills of the Forest of Dean; and from Staunton Hill, under the shelter of the Buck Stone, the view beggars description. One feels little interest in the stone itself, in the fact that a mass of iron-stone, weighing incalculable tons, has been left poised by some cataclysm of Nature in an eccentric attitude, and worshipped by the Druids; it is the view that enchains us; a view to excite a covetous ecstasy in the breasts of ancient kings, Roman or Norse. A fair green land, a sweet land, flowing with milk and

FOREST OF DEAN—AN ABANDONED MINE

honey, and promise; and so interlaced with the clouds that it seems nearer heaven than the sun-scorched peaks of the yellow south, where earth is a thing apart and—

> "The sky, one blue interminable arch
> Without a breeze, a wing, a cloud."

The haze from the Severn and the Wye fills the valleys after rain, and provides those gossamer effects of veiled mystery which are the distinctive climatic feature of our English scenery. In one short hour over the Cotswolds it is possible to see an infinite variety of swift-changing scenes, beginning with gloom and murk and thunder blue, and passing through all the gamut of sensational effects of light and shade, mist and sun, and varying colour; ending in a complete panorama of immense expanse, where every hill and hedgerow becomes at last discernible for miles; while overhead and behind, the great white cumuli continue the entertainment by making fresh mountains, inland seas, and snow-capped peaks, softer than swansdown and evasive as floating music.

Perhaps the inhabitants are careless of these things, and familiarity breeds indifference. The free miners of the Forest are only just discovering the outer world. They discovered God, according to a historian writing fifty years ago, when John Wesley came to Coleford. At that time they were barbarians. To this day they retain their Primitive Methodism, and are happy in their piety. Who need bother that Coleford Church in the Market Centre was pulled down, and its successor

relegated to a less prominent position, and hideous chapels erected in 1842 and 1851!

There is a somnolent charm about the old centre town, a severe, lower middle-class respectability, and curious absence of "gentry" in the streets. The town fair (two traction engine roundabouts and a gathering of stalls), planked down in the main street, is still a breathless, palpitating excitement. The very approach of the vans brings the children out screaming, and the women at their heels open-mouthed, staring, and dazed. Shop assistants fly to the pavement; the town turns out into the roadway; and the world begins its annual wag.

This is on Saturday. On Sunday the town is dead; the roundabouts, half fitted up, mere silent corpses. Yesterday's ragged urchins—dirtier here than in the East End of London, or even the north—have disguised themselves in Sunday clothes, and Respectability is paramount. To-morrow the Middle Ages will return, and the town will hold high revel, with all the country round flocking in for the Fair.

It may be fancy, but the miners of the Forest seem of a different physiognomy to the modern Briton. Those hard, stiff-featured faces belong to the hinds of Saxon kings. Modern garments do not belong to them. A tunic and a girdle, a sheepskin and a dirk, a bill-hook or a pike, and they would be picturesque. Those fixed, blue, uniformed, unenlightened eyes have no understanding of the world of to-day. Simple, peaceful peasants, good-natured, independent, semi-civilized, easily moved by piety.

The old style residence of the miners used to be a turf-covered cabin resting on four walls, without windows, and pierced only by a low door, with a very rude fireplace and chimney in "the pine end," and partially paved with rough stones. Now the Forest cabins are almost entirely superseded by two-storied cottages, often containing not less than four apartments. In bygone days a few neighbours, taking advantage of a moonlight night, accomplished the erection of a cabin ere the morning dawned; in which case it was supposed that the keepers had no power to pull it down. A more profitable enterprise than "shooting the moon" apparently.

"To show the eagerness of the poor families to establish themselves in the Forest, they took possession of the ancient mine-caves, walling up the back and front, leaving a vent for the smoke in the former and in the latter a gap or entrance. Their pastimes used to be dancing and football, *and wakes were likewise very popular*," observes a conscientious historian; "they also favoured the game of fives, so that at Ruerdean one side of the church was white-washed for the purpose, and resorted to even on Sundays."

In those days their Christian names smacked of the Bible more than did their conduct; and such names as River Jordan and Providence were often chosen (according to the local registers). A quaint story is told of a member of a family which possessed a Providence. A sad drunken fellow went to the Squire

with some tale of trouble, but received cold comfort, and was advised to "trust in Providence."

"Lor' bless you, sir, Providence has been dead these ten years," was the reply.

The mining population at the present day is improving in general outward appearance and good behaviour, due probably to the slow but sure educational leaven which is raising the tone of the younger members and civilizing the children. The roughness and wildness is dying out, although drink and thriftlessness are still twin curses.

FOREST OF DEAN—IN THE SCOWLES, COLLECTING THE IRON ORE

CHAPTER XV

WHERE THE ROMANS MINED

"Age has no honey. What can an old tree do but die."

AFTER the first shock at the discovery that the Forest of Dean, which is larger than the New Forest in timber area, has very few large trees, and those so rare that they are indicated as things of wonderment and remark, there comes the realization that the neighbourhood boasts an oak "which is the pride of Britain"—the second largest in the kingdom.

The Newland Oak, on close acquaintance, is less like a tree than a rock of wood from which sprout a few fine branches, mostly dead. Its girth is forty-one feet, and its bole is almost as wide as it is high. There is no indication of a hollow interior, although its heart has gone; and apparently no one is sufficiently interested to give the poor old giant a sheet of zinc to keep out the wet and prevent further decay. Its venerable aspect suggests an honourable past of some 1500 years; and it ought to last a few more with care and attention to forest hygiene.

It is a "feature" of the neighbourhood (though not in the actual Forest area), and exhibited everywhere

on post cards. It stands in a lonely grass-field in a lovely vale. Newland Church is hard by, rising among a group of old-world residences, including a row of almshouses (built in 1621), from the doors of which knotted and gnarled human veterans look out with wide-eyed curiosity at a passing stranger. They are cheery, friendly souls; and, as if longevity were a specialty of the purlieus of the Newland Oak, they invite you to step in and see an old dame of ninety-five, who is still keen of intellect, bright-eyed, and not "hard of hearing."

The agriculturists may point to their tree; but here they can show you further convincing proof of the beneficent effect of life in a peaceful Gloucestershire hamlet. The old dame's ninety-five years were all spent in two forest villages, and she awaits her end in sight of the graveyard. The nearness of the almshouses to the church makes one wonder why it is that the beneficent donors of homes for the aged poor should so often favour places with windows looking on to graves. It cannot be kind to compel the infirm and ailing to live face to face with death, and witness the mournful processions of their fellows passing to the grave. There may be a delightful peace in the atmosphere of an ancient church centre like this; but as some of us anticipate making a long acquaintance with that kind of peace after our powers of appreciation are dulled, the last years of the worthy should surely be as cheerful as possible. An almost compulsory attendance at every village funeral, as life in these almshouses entails, is rather too mediæval.

Nevertheless the houses are delightful to look at, with their cream-coloured walls and long row of uniform doorways. The twentieth century gives place to the seventeenth all round the Newland Oak. A few tiles renewed, a few roofs fallen in, that is all the change. Old England is still old in this beautiful vale, where every field is fringed with elms and the grass grows waist-high in the meadows.

At Newland Church is the tomb of Junkin Wyrrall, bow-bearer to Henry VI and Forester-in-Fee to Dean Forest. This, by the way, was considered at one time to be the only effigy of a forester in hunting costume in England. But it is not so. There is another at Skegby, near Mansfield in Sherwood. Junkin is shown wearing tight-fitting hosen and a short tunic coat with belt, and sleeves rather full at the shoulder, with a tippet, and probably a cowl, slipper-like boots slit at the sides over the ankle, a close-fitting, pleated cap with turn-up narrow brim, probably of leather, a hunter's horn at his right side, and a short sword or knife, with a handle very like a modern bayonet, on his left.

One cannot go into the Forest without hearing of the Speech House, so called from its being intended for the ancient court of "the speech." It is now a hotel, but was originally the miners' court of law. It is particularly dear to the neighbourhood, and the one abiding landmark by which the inhabitants realize their historical associations.

To be sure it does not date back as far as the Castle of St. Briavels, having been completed in 1680. It stands

upon the flat top of Speech House Hill, 572 feet above sea-level, and still contains the ancient Justice Room, a plain-looking apartment 25 feet long by 23 feet broad, with a raised gallery, or Tribune, along the southern wall, where the Eyres were held and the miners' disputes settled.

The antlered heads of fallow and red deer hang all around, a reminder of past glories of the Forest; and the room is still used by the free miners. But they no longer poach the deer, which were removed by the Crown to put temptation out of their way, some years ago, as well as to safeguard the young plantations.

Some time since a board of the flooring of the Tribune having given way, a descent was made through the opening, disclosing a dark space which had been used as a convenient receptacle for rubbish of all kinds in days long past. Among other treasures from the stow-hole were some curious old, wornout, pointed-toed shoes, some of which were of coarse and common make, with broad flat heels, and others delicately made, apparently those of ladies or young persons of high degree. The latter had high wooden heels neatly encased in leather, precisely similar to those now fashionable. A copper plate five inches in length was also found, looking as though it had once been fastened by rivets to the collar of a hound, and bearing the inscription, "Sir Edward Winnington, Bart., Bewdley." A number of shanks and bones of deer, mostly the remains of haunches, seemed to tell that some former occupant of the building had a taste for Lightfoot, and was wont

"The countless leaves of the pine are strings
Tuned to the lay the wood-god sings"

Emerson

to hide the bones under the "bench," beneath the very Throne of Justice itself, where a verderer sat in solemn state to pass sentence upon stealers of the King's venison.

By far the most impressive spot in the Forest of Dean, for the Nature-lover, is the Devil's Chapel, a pleasant walk of two and a quarter miles from Lydney, and not far from Bream. Here are some of the vast hollows cleared of iron ore by the Romans, and known in the Forest as "Scowles." The spot is hidden by a thick wood, but the approach to it is well known in the neighbourhood, and a winding red path, below green aisles, leads one to a wood of beech trees of no apparent interest at first sight. But go under the canopy and there is a veritable fairyland.

Nature has taken possession of this ancient quarry; tall trees bend over cavernous hollows, long roots run downwards, like giant arteries clawing hold of red rocks. Ferns and trees grow in the hollows, and here and there is a deep shaft. Step warily, and descend, though your heart may stand still at the possibility of pits and horrors which are pure fancy; for the mine is only a great quarry which the Romans honeycombed in every direction, leaving masses of stone where the ore was not prolific, and tunnelling into the soft red earth where the work was easy. There would be nothing remarkable in the scene, and it might well pass for a freak of Nature, were it not for the extraordinary way in which the luxurious beeches have sprung from scanty layers of soil on the tops of the boulders, joining their boughs

overhead into a canopy through which the sunlight filters, turning the place into a fantastic forest rockery, where all that one sees in miniature in a garden is magnified to gigantic proportions; forest trees growing from the tops of rocks where ferns might be, lesser trees and evergreens in the pits and hollows, and beech leaves carpeting the floors of deep chasms, from which one looks upward with childlike awe. This is indeed fairyland, with an element of the weird, a scene impossible of pictorial representation, save perhaps by Arthur Rackham; for it is a blend of nature and art—no, not art, say rather Time. Here we see the growth of trees both above ground and below. The roots twine like serpents round huge rocks, extending almost as far below the surface as their branches mount to the sky.

In this particular "Scowle" trial workings were resumed in 1854, and some Roman coins were found. When the men employed came to a block of stone too heavy to move, the engineer ordered them to put a cartridge into it and split it up. But in the meantime a workman had driven his pick under the lower edge and pulled out some little round bits of metal.

"Here be a lot of buttons," said he, handing them up for inspection.

They were not buttons, however, but coins of several Roman Emperors—the penny of the New Testament. One coin was a *denarius* of Nerva, and bore the abbreviated inscription: "The Emperor Nerva, Cæsar Augustus, Sovereign Pontiff, in the power of the tribune and consul for the fifth time" (*i.e.* in the year 98). Another coin

bore the inscription, "Hadrianus, Augustus, Consul III, the Father of his People."

It was in 121 that Hadrianus came to this Island to look into things for himself, reform abuses, and put garrisons under more rigid discipline. It was then that he began the building of the Great Wall from the Solway to the Tyne, a wall 74 miles long and 35 feet high, on which he stationed 15,000 men to keep back the Scots. As he afterwards marched, like a private soldier, through every province in the Roman world, he probably visited these iron mines, which were then of vast importance to the Romans.

Any reference to the beauty spots of the Forest of Dean—and there are so many that it would require a volume to do justice to them—would be incomplete without a word on the view from Symond's Yat, one of the loftiest hills in the county. It has an exceptional advantage in that it can be reached close to the summit by a quite reasonable carriage road giving no suggestion of any particular eminence or promise of a distant panorama. The carriage stops at the top of a hill, and a well-worn path, through overhanging bushes, brings you to a little plateau of rock that seems perched up in the sky.

If you had come upon it by accident you would recoil in fear and hold your breath. Half a dozen paces take you to the edge of the precipice which looks sheer down some hundreds of feet into the valley, through which the river Wye winds in serpentine fashion between forest-clad hills. The view includes the Cotswolds, and

several adjacent counties. If the day be showery, with rolling grey clouds, and great sun-shafts coming and going on the distant, golden hill-tops, the spectacle beggars description. There are many fine panorama vistas in different parts of the country, but this one is remarkable for its infinite variety of scenery, due to the proximity of the Forest of Dean, the quarries of out-standing, rocky crags, and perforated hill-sides ; but more especially to the devious windings of the beautiful Wye, which follows a series of graceful curves, beginning in a distant, purple-shadowed gorge, and vanishing again beneath you into another vale, after threading its way all round the Yat forming a giant moat.

The red rocks and the red earth are suggestive of Devon ; but the river Dart can show nothing finer than the Wye.

The beautiful estuary of the Severn is but a few miles distant from the Forest boundary ; and one can imagine that St. Briavels, close by, was at one time a fortress of considerable importance. Sir Walter Raleigh lived near here for a time, also Sir Francis Drake ; and the former found his wife in the Forest of Dean (she was one of the Throckmortons). It has been suggested that here Raleigh tasted his first potato and smoked his first tobacco in England—although Devon claims the latter episode. Tintern Abbey, now severed from the immediate Forest boundary, was once an integral portion of the Forest ; but it is too well known, and too much painted, to need description.

It is not very generally known that Bacon, the inter-

preter of Nature, was once a miner and worker in iron. Lord Lisle, Bacon, and a number of gentlemen formed themselves into a Wire-Workers company, and set up works at Tintern and Whitbrook on the Wye. Witness the following letter:—

"Bacon to Cecil

"It may please your good Lordship—Understanding that his Majesty will be pleased to sell some good portions of wood in the Forest of Dene, which lies very conveniently to the company's wireworks at Tynterne and Whitbrooke, we are informed to have recourse to your Lordship as to our governor of the said company, humbly praying your Lordship to afford us some reasonable quantity thereof, the better to uphold the said works, whereof by information from our farmers there we stand in such need as without your Lordship's favour we shall hardly be able to subsist any long time. We do not entreat your Lordship for any other or more easy price than that your Lordship directs the sale of it to others, only we humbly pray for some preferment in the opportunity of the place where the wood lies in the quantity, as it may answer in some proportion to our wants. Herein if your Lordship will be pleased to favour us, then we humbly pray your Lordship to direct us to some suit persons as your Lordship resolves to employ in the business. And so we humbly take our leave of your Lordship.

"Your Lordship's humbly at command. London, the 7th of May, 1611."

If you have never actually seen coal mined from the earth, or the quarrying of iron ore, and would like to do so, you cannot manage it with greater comfort than in the Forest of Dean and its neighbourhood. Here one escapes the squalor and grime and smoke of the average colliery district, while enjoying a good many opportunities convenient to the holiday-maker. The actual Forest centre is off the beaten track of the tourist and the tripper; but the number of visitors is increasing. As a place for a holiday it is an inexpensive one, local ideas of charges being in an embryonic stage, not yet excessive. The hire of conveyances is reasonable, hotel charges moderate, and the tip-hunger has not yet seized upon the foresters. Indeed, the independent miner may be offended by the offer of a fee for small services rendered.

Be quite sure of your itinerary before starting, because there is such a puzzling network of railways that even the company's servants are apt to get fogged. Send luggage in advance, because it is little use watching it *en route*. It may arrive before you, or after. It is a matter of no anxiety to the officials; they can only assure you that it will arrive in due course, but by what route they don't quite know.

Cycles are usable everywhere by the young and energetic, if a few steep hills are walked. The slopes are for the greater part long and gentle, and the roads run, wherever possible, in serpentine fashion through the valleys.

There are two main railway routes, one skirting the

Severn, the other along the shores of the Wye. The route through Ross and Monmouth should be chosen on the outward trip, and the return can be made along the banks of the Severn. Gloucester is, of course, the centre from which these different routes branch, and to which they return. The whole route from London, after passing Swindon on the outward journey, is full of interest and charm for those who do not know the West Country.

VI. WINDSOR FOREST

CHAPTER XVI

THE WOOD OF THE QUEENS

"Thy forest Windsor, and thy green retreats,
At once the Monarch's and the Muses' seats."

OVER there, through an opening in the leafy walls and across four miles of rolling tree-tops, stands an enchanted city on a hill amongst the clouds. It glows out for a moment, soon to be enveloped in a swirl of thunder-blue and fade; but anon, when through the vapour the sun pours down shafts of smoky light, it looms afresh—but now a gloomy fortress. The heavens clear; the sun gains power; its beams touch every battlement and fretted roof of chapel, tower, and fort, gleaming joyously. The citadel becomes an island temple, mounting to the skies by gentle slopes above a sea of purple. And when the shower is past, and the white rollers of the sky reveal the endless blue of the interminable arch beyond, we see the red roofs of the meaner houses, nestling insignificantly below the palace of the King.

This was the view of the Castle that Queen Adelaide

WINDSOR FOREST—QUEEN VICTORIA'S FAVOURITE OAK

"Thy Forest Windsor! and thy green retreats,
At once the Monarch's and the Muse's seats!"

Pope

loved. She signalized the fact by choosing a particular beech tree in Windsor Forest, from beneath which the fairy vision could be seen; and it bears her name on an iron tablet. A seat is conveniently constructed below, from which, on a showery day, the lonely wanderer in the wood may watch the changing panorama of the distant Castle in the clouds.

The general public do not much trouble this lordly wood of the Queens—for it was beloved by Queen Victoria, Queen Charlotte, and Queen Anne. It is always open, and the drivers of vehicles plying for hire at the Windsor Station know it well. They bring visitors of all nationalities to Queen Adelaide's tree, and point with pride to the view in the opening of the trees. It is probably better known to foreigners and Americans than to the inhabitants of Windsor.

Here in Bray Wood, which is not in Royal occupation, we are nevertheless in Windsor Forest, which is popularly supposed to have ceased to exist. When visitors to the Castle ask where the Forest is, the officials, with a vague wave of the hand, indicate the park. And when, with weary feet, the excursionists seek the Long Walk, blithely hoping to reach the good greenwood beyond, they grow weary, and content themselves with the beauty of the lovely park, which spreads on every side without any suggestion of thicket.

But there *is* a forest; and it is best reached by avoiding the Castle altogether and taking the road to Ascot. Some three miles out, on the route now traversed by the motor-buses of the Great Western

Railway, and at the top of Highstanding Hill, are two gates and a lodge. The gates face each other, the one to the left leading into the park in the direction of the Conqueror Oak (the largest tree in the Forest), the other beside the lodge into Bray Wood, where dead and dying oaks and noble beeches at once reveal the antiquity of the Royal Chase. There are game preserves here; but the public may wander along sandy roads and mossy drives spangled, in the spring, with millions of violets, if they keep to the proper tracks.

Leaving Queen Adelaide's tree, and following the road for a short distance, a broad drive down a slope leads eventually to a valley, through which a noisy brook runs under the shade of drooping and falling trees. The fury of its original course, as shown by the torn and jagged banks, has of late years been restrained by dams and directed by sluices, so that it maintains a respectable, dignified flow, as becomes a Royal stream in a stately wood. But the undulating character of this valley provides exquisite variety, and its great similarity to portions of Burnham Beeches is so marked that pictures of the one might well be mistaken for scenes in the other.

All kinds of trees are in this wood, from hoary oaks of a thousand years—many of them gaunt and tall even in death—to young and blossoming hawthorns. The drives wind in many directions, and there is not much fear of losing oneself. A step from the roadway, however, and you may inadvertently tread in a pheasant's nest—for the careless bird has a habit of

dropping her eggs anywhere in a carpet of beech leaves. Keepers are there, but not obtrusively in evidence. They like you to keep to the broad drives; and there is really very little to be gained by leaving them, except gratification of the ordinary human desire to evade restrictions.

The magnificently grown tree entableted "Queen Victoria's Oak" is not beautiful, except to a forester; nor is it impressive at first sight, until one notes its girth and the immense column of wood rising as high as many of the surrounding trees without branching. A bole to gladden the eye of a timber-merchant. One wonders at first why the late Queen should have chosen this particular tree as her favourite when the wood abounds with others so much more beautiful. But a brief halt in the centre of the violet-spangled lawn from which it rises, soon impresses one with an appreciation of that sound judgment and matter-of-fact wisdom which were the great little lady's richest possessions. It is a beautiful spot, enwrapped with an atmosphere of tranquillity and seclusion, yet not denied light or air, and combining the romantic beauty of the forest with the richness of a garden.

Queen Anne's Oak, not far away, has nothing particular to distinguish it; and the tablet which bears her name is probably the record of an accidental pause beneath its shade, fixed by some loyal forester with or without Royal warrant. There is no seat, and the surroundings are commonplace. Queen Charlotte's Oak is larger, and also cherished apart.

In this part of Windsor Forest, which might well be called The Wood of the Queens, there is much of the romantic mediæval spirit that one associates with the Forest of Arden. A beautiful and thrilling environment in spring; full of rich colour and quiet dignity in winter; an excellent retreat for the study of trees, and for the landscape artist, especially in the latter season. It is in the winter that the painter finds the woodlands so interesting.

But charming as is the leafless landscape to the artist, with its diversity of crossing bough and red and purple mists, the approach of spring in woods like these brings early manifestation of a coming transformation that fills him with delight. He is conscious of the passing of the winter season before the ordinary observer sees a sign of change.

The hazes thicken; and light rays cease their winter gauzy harmonies and play upon masses of definite shooting bud and embryo leaf. First the crests of the woodland billows show colour in the sunshine, red-brown and gold-brown, no longer entirely at the mercy of the changing lights. Their hue is more insistent as the days go by, with almost a suggestion of autumn.

In the Forest paths themselves no change is yet apparent; no bud obtrudes, no bough seems altered, unless it be examined closely; it is in the surface mass of myriad points upturned in worship of the magic sun-god that the first warm blush of gratitude sweeps over the landscape.

IN THE WOOD OF THE QUEENS, WINDSOR FOREST

In the tangle and the thicket, and in the sheltered hedgerows, the elder, profligate of strength and weak of stem, puts on its pale green shoots long before the rest of our native trees. It is sometimes green before even the cherry and the horse-chestnut leaves make any sign. Nor does it fade any earlier in autumn on that account, illustrating the established law that the order in which the leaves fall has nothing to do with that in which they appear. (For instance, the lime, a comparatively late-budding tree in spring, is among the first to begin the shedding of its leaves—as early as September.)

In the glades spring's advent is first signalled by the tender plumes of the waving birches sprouting joyously and early. Indispensable to the forest *mise en scène*, these beauteous silver ladies now set the fashion. All the winter they have sentinelled the woods and broken up the shadows with their tall and slender gaiety; and now, true feminines, they joyously acclaim the warming of the sun by coming out in gaudy plumes. The birch leaves are daintily small, tiny spear-points that shiver like the aspen and blend with the skies. Heedless of frost, and indifferent to the east wind, they fill in the hollows of the forest with shimmering green, and proclaim the marching of the season's pageant. Hearts leap, and fancy's shuttle flitters to and fro through all the gossamer of gold, and brown, and invisible green that make the coloured garment of the undulating groves.

And next to greet the spring the jealous beech, most

beautiful of all majestic trees, in bark texture, droop of bough and leaf, and set upon a copper-coloured carpet that no artist's palette yet has adequately matched. When she loosens her shower of golden-green it is so vivid that it wrings a cry of ecstasy from man and child, and sets old women dreaming of the Never-never Land, of the Fairy Prince that came not, and of the love each spring-time promises to the young and fair and true.

Such a vivid, unreal colour-song does the luxuriant beech tree sing, that it needs a close perception to discover that its melody is just arrested sunshine; its green no green at all, merely the blatant yellow of Nature's primary palette, with every leaf transparent and illuminated. Its gaudy hue offends the nice artistic soul. Its leaves, luminous and crude, refuse to blend with the sadder backgrounds. They shout in rampant joy. Youth shouts back; pulses stir; cold blood runs quicker; bosoms glow; and Venus, ever chilled by winter frosts, calls the lovers to the woods to see the promise of the rich, luxuriant summer shade.

'Tis to woman that the voices of the woodland whisper loudest; but she seldom seeks the shade alone. One rarely meets a maiden seeking solitude with trees. Man, who hunts in thickets and comes thither with his axe, feels no terror in the glade: but the virgin in the tree-shade hears the whisper of the wild; leaf-talk and suggestion; garden gossip and tradition, handed down from Eden by a succession of thousand-year-old sires; whispers from the original Tree that charmed her with its fruit.

Since Eden the noblest trees have furnished food for swine; but their leaf-talk is the same. Spring's invitation to indolence on a carpet-couch of winter leaves will ever bring the lover from his labours and the maiden from her loom. Beauty calls to beauty; and the universal law of seasonable progression thrusts man and woman, tree and flower, ever onward till

"As we go
We drop like the fruit of the tree,
Even we,
Even so."

The charms of the forest change, but do not fade with the varying seasons! Spring, however, marks a stage so definite that one realizes how effectively Nature called a halt during the winter.

The summer follows spring imperceptibly; autumn creeps in, riots, fades, and lingers long after the arrival of the wind from the ice-fields; then comes a scarce distinguishable change, for winter follows slowly. The artist is lured by the delightful tree frame-work which so lately bore the varied garments of the seasons. Many boughs still retain their leaves, and keep at bay all sense of desolation—some oaks are never bare. Moss and evergreen, and humble ground plants below —which love the light no less than the trees, but bide their time and wait the searching out of winter's intermittent sun—delight the painter's eye and creep into his canvases. He labours on uninterruptedly, welcoming occasional snow and frost, and months slip by. The spring, however, comes all too suddenly.

The season's magic wand touches bough and twig, and all the pent-up glory of folded bud, enfurled in autumn frosts, is unpent, and with disconcerting haste gushes forth.

The painter plaintively cries "Halt," and pleads for time to capture some at least of all these wonderful manifestations of the moving of the spirit: but the year is in its youth, and youth knows not reticence nor restraint.

The spring is impetuous; it hurries on. The hibernating buds unfurl, and then begins the dance. The birch leads, her statelier sisters follow in their order; and the hoary old oak and the laggard ash assemble in the last quadrille.

It is only in woods where calm and absolute seclusion can be found that this exalted spirit of the entrancement of the spring pervades the mind; and we have it here in queenly company.

. . . . . .

Windsor Forest has this distinction apart from other Royal enclosures. Its actual history since 1215 has been carefully tabulated. Trees planted centuries since are everywhere dotted about the park, with dated iron standards beneath to serve as guides to the forester, and educational aids to the student. By the assistance of the standards one can learn how to know in some measure the ages of trees; and some surprises are in store for those accustomed to allow admiration for great diameter to mislead them into wild guessing.

Windsor Castle itself, which Pope praised so

NEAR THE LONG WALK, WINDSOR

"To paint anew the flowery sylvan scenes,
To crown the forests with immortal greens,
Make Windsor's hills in lofty numbers rise,
And lift her turrets nearer to the skies"

Pope

unstintingly, is not a thing of beauty when viewed from the town; it is too suggestive of the barrack and prison: but from the park—

"Where Windsor domes and pompous turrets rise"—

the effect is magnificent. It rears its grey towers from out a bed of tree-tops, often backed by the fine rolling white clouds which are a feature of the valley of the Thames.

Every one is supposed to have visited the Castle, and to be familiar with the view from the Terrace and Tower; but it is to be feared that Windsor is one of those places which the Englishman always promises himself to explore seriously, and the resolve is more honoured in the breach than the observance—unless wealth and honour come to him, and he is bidden thither, and carried by special train. There have been men who swore never to set foot within its walls unless "commanded," and lived and worked with that aim, achieving their ambition at last.

The average visitor is usually satisfied with a scamper through the State Rooms at the heels of a guide, with a brief stroll in the park, where he finds more grass than trees, and more avenues than thickets.

"Not chaos-like, together crush'd and bruis'd,
But, as the world, harmoniously confus'd;
Where order in variety we see,
And where, tho' all things differ, all agree."

That interminable avenue of two and a half miles of the Long Walk has exasperated many a would-be

investigator, and driven him to opprobious epithets and violent mental revolt. Instead of

> "Wandering thoughtful in the silent wood,
> To attend the duties of the wise and good,
> T' observe a mean, be to himself a friend,
> To follow nature, and regard his end,"

he finds himself quite surfeited with trees, and goes back unedified. Of course every serious amateur photographer, with an exhibition record, considers it his bounden duty to go to Windsor and take *his* picture of the Castle (and he must get permission from the Deputy Ranger). One quite celebrated brother of the Order of the Tripod once went down and made a magnificent study. It was exhibited, lauded, and admired ; but when brought to Windsor the inhabitants fell foul of it. The view had been taken in two parts, by the composite method, and one of the parts was printed the wrong way round. It was a rude shock to those simple lovers of the picture post card, who had all their lives believed that a photograph could not lie.

One of the most interesting pictures of the Castle ever taken appears in the local guide—condensed from William Menzies' larger book—which shows the Royal residence above the trees, as seen from the end of the Long Walk. It is taken with a telephoto lens, and gives a view which would otherwise be impossible in photography.

The southern end of the park, which includes Virginia Water, is perhaps better known than any other. It has a perpetual stream of visitors who come by rail ;

and motor-cars bring yet more. Here the lake is the great attraction. Previously there was a stream known as Virginia River, with an occasional pond along its course. Excavations were made, and the first pond-head, or dam, was thrown across from Botany Bay to where the temple ruins now stand. A great flood a few years later washed away the dam, and the lake was enlarged to its present size of one hundred and thirty acres in the reign of George III. It is two miles long and of varying width, and its chief pride is the water-fall, which, for an artificial production, is wonderfully effective.

It is recorded that the labourers engaged upon the construction of this waterfall had great difficulty in finding carriages with axle-trees strong enough to convey the great stones (known geologically as sarsens, or grey wethers), of which the fall is constructed, and it was found that "none bore the strain so well as green alder newly cut." The great boulders, each weighing several tons, were procured from Bagshot Heath, some eight miles distant.

It is believed by some that Virginia Water was so called in honour of Queen Elizabeth; by others, after the American State: but according to the late Mr. William Menzies, the author of a work on Windsor Forest and Park, it took its name from the old river previously referred to.

Not far from the famous waterfall are some ruins of an ancient temple, rather startling, and decidedly impressive, and provocative of much wonderment. So

cunningly are they arranged with upright and prostrate columns that the wanderer, coming upon them suddenly in the solitude, may be pardoned for imagining that he is looking upon the remains of an ancient temple *in situ*, instead of the remnant of an old-world shrine brought from Tripoli by command of His Majesty King George IV. It was erected in its present position in 1827 by Sir James Wyattville, the architect who extensively altered and enlarged Windsor Castle.

The ivy is already grappling with the arches, and one views this quaint ruin with mixed feelings. Its cunning is amusing; and Nature is eagerly aiding and abetting the deception; but when the deluded sightseer first realizes the truth of this Georgian imposition he is annoyed with the impudent, if picturesque, fraud, it is so impressively solemn.

Among the ruins is a stone tomb, the Latin inscription of which tells us that Marcus Julius Cethegus, of Philyss, erected it to his beloved wife, Domitia Rogata, who lived twenty-three years. And there is also a marble altar with a Greek inscription to the effect that it was dedicated by Publius Aurelius, a servant of Jupiter, to Jupiter Helios, the Great Serapis, and to other gods worshipped in the same Temple.

Near the upper end of the lake, the road towards the south leads to Ascot Racecourse, and to the woods of Swinley, which, unlike any part of the park and Forest, are rich in wildflowers, with bluebells and primroses covering large tracts. Farther on, amid the brooding calm of the Forest, are the earthworks of Cæsar's camp,

VIRGINIA WATER, WINDSOR FOREST

"The hollow winds thro' naked temples roar;
Round broken columns clasping ivy turned"

Pope

which overlook the great Roman road from the west to London and Silchester.

The original Forest was of immense extent, having a circumference of a hundred and twenty miles, including part of Buckinghamshire, a small portion of Middlesex, the south-east side of Berkshire, as far as Hungerford, and a very large part of Surrey. In the very earliest days almost the whole of Surrey was technically within Forest bounds, and subject to Forest law; while for several centuries the rights of Windsor Forest on the Surrey side included Cobham and Chertsey, and extended along the side of the Wey as far as Guildford. But it gradually dwindled in extent, as did every other forest, through encroachment and grants, so that at the time of James I, when Norden made his detailed survey, the total circuit, exclusive of the Buckinghamshire Liberties, was only seventy-seven and a half miles. By 1813 it was further reduced to sixty-six miles.

In the year 1275 the foresters and verderers were busy in selecting oaks and beeches throughout the Forest to be used for the impaling of Windsor Park "and the King's other works," and the boundary seems to have been completed in 1278. And in November of that year the Keeper of Chute Forest, Wilts (now extinct), was informed by the King that he was sending one of his yeomen to take in that Forest live deer to stock his park at Windsor, and that he was to permit as many to be taken as could be without damage to Chute Forest. In the previous year (according to the Close Rolls) there were then wild (silvesters) bulls and cows in Windsor

Park: the Constable was ordered to effect their capture and sale, and to use the money towards the expenses of the King's children then staying at the Castle.

A little later oaks were felled to be used in the making of a great barge for the King's ferry at Datchet; and in 1276 the Constable of the Tower of London obtained thirty Windsor oaks to burn lime with for the works of the Tower. Presumably they were floated downstream.

The Keeper of the Forest received orders from Edward I, on 20th May 1286, when the King was just about to cross the seas, to admit Edward, Earl of Cornwall, his kinsman, to chase in that Forest at pleasure, and to take deer, and aid and counsel him in so doing. A record was to be kept of the number of deer thus taken. As a buck was roughly of the value of £10 in our money, and as much esteemed for food as mutton to-day, these concessions to hunt were a substantial benefit.

From this point onwards the records are full of detail showing that the management of the Forest was vested in a full staff of the usual officials, Forest Courts (or eyres) were held, and judgments delivered; but the gradual encroachment of the people upon the ancient Royal prerogatives was made clear at an eyre held in New Windsor on 4th August 1488, when, according to Dr. Cox, those that claimed special liberties in the actual Forest of Windsor were Elizabeth, Queen of England (not Queen Bess); the Bishops of Winchester and Salisbury; the Abbots of Reading, Abingdon, Waltham,

Westminster, Stratford, Langthorn, Cirencester, and Chertsey; the Priors of Hurley, Bisham, and Merton; the Prioress of Bromehall and Ankerwyke; the Dean and Canons of Windsor; the Provost and College of Eton; the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury; the mayor and citizens of New Windsor; the Duchess of Norfolk, and two laymen. A goodly list who had received or extracted favours and grants; and note the preponderance of the Church party.

Later, the imperious Henry VIII, devoted to the chase, and amazingly successful in curbing the temper of his subjects, made the last Royal attempt to afforest a new district between his own Palace of Nonsuch, near Epsom and Hampton Court, and obtained two Acts of Parliament, the one "for uniting divers lordships and manors to the castle of Windsor," and the other "for the uniting of the manor of Nonsuch and divers other manors to the Honor of Hampton Court." But shortly after his death this newly-created "honor" was dechased and the deer removed to Windsor Forest.

Bluff King Hal was passionately fond of hunting—while he remained bluff, we may presume, and before he attained unwieldy proportions. His chief sporting companion, Sir William Fitzwilliam, was made Keeper of the Surrey side of the Forest. At the end of July 1526 Fitzwilliam wrote from Guildford, "I received a packet of letters addressed to the King, which I took to His Majesty immediately: but as he was going out to have a shot at a stag, he asked me to keep them until the evening."

Again, in 1528, Sir Thomas Heneage in a letter to Wolsey, from Easthampstead, said that the King on the previous day had taken great pains with his hunting "from nine in the morning till seven at night," but only obtained one deer—the grandest red deer killed by him or any of his hunters that year—which he sent as a present to the Cardinal.

Not a bad day's hunting. Stalking the deer with the crossbow must have been as arduous as the present fashion of the gun, and a nearer range necessary. They were hardy in those days—and the women too.

Now comes Queen Mary, that melancholy, unfortunate person, execrated in history, who showed herself "no sportswoman," for it is recorded that on the Tuesday after her marriage, when she was at Winsdor, a novel method of "sport" was introduced. Toils were raised in the Forest four miles in length, when a great number of deer, driven therein by the hounds and the huntsmen, were slaughtered.

How like the other toils and shambles into which her political enemies were driven. And as if to emphasize the verdict of history, her sister Elizabeth, a sportswoman to the backbone, hunted in the Forest under the guidance of her favourite Sir Henry Neville, and remained keenly attached to the sport to the end of her days; as late as 1602 she shot "a great fat stag" at Windsor with her own hand, and sent it as a present to Archbishop Parker.

Slowly but surely the power of Demos increased. The rights of the Crown were curtailed, and James I

THE CONQUEROR OAK—THE LARGEST TREE IN WINDSOR FOREST

raised the wrath of the residents by attempting to close the Little Park and Cranbourne Chase against all comers. But the "squires and better folk," says Dixon in *Royal Windsor*, "made private keys and entered like gentlemen of the highest quality: the locks were exchanged, and they broke the fences with as little scruple as the tramps."

Charles I hunted in the Forest, and attempted, among the other fatuous things of his reign, to revive the Forest pleas, and the ancient tyranny of fourfooted beasts over man here as in other forests. Justice seats were held both at Bagshot and Windsor, with all the old formalities, each forester presenting his horn on bended knee, and each woodward his hatchet. The revival was bitterly resented, and from 1632 to 1642 the gentlemen of Surrey hunted in companies of eighty or a hundred.

In 1640 the Grand Jury of Berks complained as to "the innumerable red deer in the Forest (Windsor) which if they go on so for a few years more will neither leave food nor room for any other creature in the Forest." Soon a great tumult arose; the people round the New Lodge, in a riotous fashion killed one hundred fallow deer, in addition to some red deer, and threatened to pull down the pales of that park. And this under the very shadow of the Castle.

In 1642 the Long Parliament took possession of Windsor, as of other Crown property, and spoliation began. The deer disappeared from the Great Park, and only a few remained in the Forest. Much of the finest timber was felled—but for the Navy.

At the Restoration Charles restocked the preserves; and in 1731 the deer numbered 1300; in 1806 they had dwindled to 318. In 1813 came the disafforesting Act of Windsor; and in the following year a troop of the Horse Guards and a detachment of the 5th Infantry were employed for two days in sweeping through the wild heaths and dells that were about to be enclosed, and driving thence the deer into the parks; but in this rough process many were slaughtered.

The area of the Great Park at the present day is about 3000 acres, and it contains in round numbers 1000 fallow and 100 red deer. Cranbourne Park, though part of the other, has a pale of its own, and contains a small herd of white red deer.

In addition there is a most picturesque herd of long-haired white goats. At first sight they might be mistaken for sheep, until the sun glints on their glossy coats in a glowing line of white along the whole length of the herd, making them seem luminous in their outline. They are quite tame, but, like all their kind, suspicious and shy of the unknown quantity. The rams are long-horned and very stately, the ancients among them recalling the Scapegoat in Holman Hunt's celebrated picture, the weariness of their gait and the sadness of their eyes their heritage through the centuries.

The herd has furnished the regimental goat, a gift from the reigning monarch to the Welsh Fusiliers, since 1844. The herd may often be seen in the neighbourhood of Cranbourne.

. . . . . .

The whole area of the park is full of interest for those who care to follow the story of particular trees, plantations, avenues, and statuary.

The equestrian statue on Snow Hill, the work of Westmacott, was erected in 1813 by George IV to the memory of George III, and is of colossal proportions, measuring 25 ft. 6 in. from the top of the pedestal to the summit of the statue. The pedestal was built to resemble the base of Peter the Great's statue in St. Petersburg, but many pieces of stone went to the completion instead of one block of granite.

It was here, tradition records, that our Royal Bluebeard, Bluff King Hal, listened for the gun which was to be fired from the battlements of the Round Tower as a signal that Anne Boleyn was no more. Bluff King Hal indeed! A callous butcher. Yet how much we owe to his ruthless will and precocious sense of modernity—as we now understand it. For Britain he struck with a mailed fist; in his harem he wielded the scimitar; and to his daughter Elizabeth he bequeathed, in modified form, a legacy of licentiousness and masterful sagacity which served England well enough, and laid the foundation of much future greatness.

Cumberland Lodge is, of course, one of the features of the park. Here resided the famous Duchess of Marlborough, who held the rangership of the park until her death in 1744 at the age of eighty-five. Her grandson succeeded her, but in 1746 William, Duke of Cumberland, became Ranger, and enlarged the Lodge which now bears his name. It is the official residence of the Ranger. In

the gardens is the celebrated vine, reputed to be the largest in the world (how many enjoy the repute!), which fills a vinery 138 feet long by 118 feet wide, and is well over its century. It still bears enormous crops, and its fruit is of the finest quality.

The Lodge is near the lake, and commands views of the Obelisk on which at one time the word "Culloden" was inscribed in large letters, but obliterated by command of Queen Victoria and the word "Cumberland" substituted.

The park rejoices in innumerable walks and drives of lordly extent. The famous Long Walk covers two and a quarter miles, and the Rhododendron Walk a mile, Queen Anne's Ride, a fine grass avenue, about three miles, Queen Victoria's Avenue, and Prince Consort's Drive.

From the Obelisk there is a view of Smith's Lawn (named after some forgotten servant), which boasts a famous pollard beech of a probable age of eight hundred to one thousand years.

Many of the plantations round about this lawn were formed in 1747, and are the first made in the park with irregular outlines. Our ancestors favoured avenues when they planted. Tradition says that much of it was done by supernumerary soldiers encamped not far from Cumberland Lodge, and raised during the Scotch rebellion in 1745.

Across Smith's Lawn stands the equestrian statue of the Prince Consort, with its inscription in English, Gaelic, Sanscrit, and Latin.

NEAR HIGH STANDING HILL, WINDSOR

The Lime Tree Avenue, to the east of Cumberland Lodge, was planted about 1718, and the Scarlet Oak Avenue in 1877–78. The plantation (date about 1693) to the east of the Lodge, near the Royal Chapel, is historic. It furnished the data—in the discussion about the Royal Forests in 1854—for forming the valuation of growing plantations. The outcome of that inquiry is evident in the present flourishing state of the New Forest plantations.

That famous letter of instruction to the Spanish Admiral (discovered in one of the prizes after the defeat of the Spanish Armada) to demolish the Forest of Dean and the New Forest, that Britain might be denuded of the necessary oak for the building of her wooden walls, resulted in a decision to encourage the growing of oak trees farther inland. The attention of Parliament was directed to the danger of relying upon forests too near the seaboard, that might be destroyed by hostile raids, and as a consequence some thirteen acres in Windsor, among others, were sown with acorns in 1580, by direction of Lord Burleigh. The result may be seen to-day, on the land rising up to Cranbourne, in the Maiden Oaks Plantation. It affords an object-lesson of the slow growth of trees, and a standard of comparison by which the age of older monsters may be arrived at.

The enormous girth and height that may be attained by some trees in three hundred years is exemplified in a variety of places in the park; and the little, white-painted iron standards with the age plates, being set close to the trunks, compel one to go and stand beneath

each specimen. He who runs may *not* read in this instance.

Herne's Oak is no more — the old haunted tree immortalized by Shakespeare was blown down in 1863.

> "There is an old tale goes, that Herne the hunter,
> Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
> Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
> Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
> And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle;
> And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
> In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
> You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know,
> The superstitious idle-headed eld
> Received, and did deliver to our age
> This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth."

Tradition, which can sometimes be practical as well as romantic, declares, according to Menzies, that Herne, or Horne, was a keeper of the Forest centuries ago, and was wounded by a deer. He became insane, tied the deer's antlers on his head, ran through the Forest in a state of nudity, and hanged himself at last on this oak.

A young tree was planted by Queen Victoria to mark the spot where the original tree stood, and a tablet records the fact.

A hundred and twenty years ago a detailed survey of the trees of the park and Forest was made by John Burn, who cut a piece out of the bark of each tree claimed by the Crown, and branded in the letters W.F. with a crown and a consecutive number. Recently a beech tree was split by the merest chance some few inches in from the bark, and revealed the old brand in a perfect state of preservation. The bark had first

covered the scarred spot, then the tree added to its girth, and was built up layer by layer over the wound, until only a faint indentation remained on the outside. Photographs of the split tree show the marking as fresh as if made yesterday.

In this same fashion the history of trees and forests is sometimes written in their "rings." In the great trees of California, four thousand years old, it is possible to count back through the centuries and fix the actual years of forest fires by the searing of the rings, healed by time, but still discernible—also the actual course of the fire, and the direction of the wind, by the deeper scorching of one side of the tree where the annual ring was destroyed.

The remarkable legibility of the Windsor forester's brand marks of 1790 makes the claim of Major Rooke to have found the brand of King John in the middle of an oak at Sherwood seem more reasonable; and although the antiquaries may doubt whether the Crown trees were ever branded in the time of John, it is not unlikely that a brand was often used to mark particular trees chosen for felling, or destined for grants to abbeys and such-like.

The trees of Windsor are extremely interesting because of their variety. Planting in all ages has contributed to the natural profusion of the locality, so that we find prospects of unexampled magnificence quite unlike any others in the Crown lands.

The trees of our forests are nearly all indigenous, with a preponderance of the sturdier varieties, and a sprinkling

of imported ones. The oak, birch, beech, and ash provide the majority. The conifers are not abundant, except in the Government plantations. Where man has interfered we find the foreign trees, such as the elm, lime, chestnut, plane, poplar, and walnut; some of which we owe to the Romans. Elms are not much in evidence, except at Windsor, for it is nearly always around the habitations of man, near vanished monasteries, castles, towns, and churches that we find them. In the Royal Forests they were rare.

Wherever the monks tilled and reclaimed the land, there do we find the elms; and how inevitable the association of the monasteries and the common elm! A ruined abbey without an elm would seem incongruous.

This absence of the common elm is not altogether due to its being an importation. Evelyn describes it as "a tree of consort, sociable, and affecting to grow in company, that the very best I have ever seen do almost touch one another; this also protects them from the winds, and causes them to shoot up an extraordinary height; so as in little more than forty years they arrive to a load of timber, provided they be sedulously and carefully cultivated, and the soil propitious. For an elm does not thrive so well in the forest, as where it may enjoy scope for the roots to dilate and spread in the sides, as in hedgerows and avenues, where they have the air likewise free. The elm, by reason of its aspiring and tapering growth (unless it be topped to enlarge the branches and make them spread low), is the least offensive to corn and pasture grounds, to both which and the

THE FALLS, VIRGINIA WATER

cattle they afford a benign shade, defence, and agreeable ornament."

The elms most frequently seen in this country are wych elms, which are indigenous, and may be distinguished from the common elm by being more wide-spreading in proportion to height. The common elm sends up a long, straight central trunk; the wych elm divides off again and again; the former has therefore the more commanding appearance. Both have rough bark and small leaves, the leaves of the wych elm being larger than the others. The wych elm is sometimes called the mountain elm, although as a matter of fact it is not found at higher altitudes in this country than the *ulmus campestris*. Strangely enough, both of them thrive well in the valleys.

The claim of the lime trees to be indigenous in England is disputable; the common lime is generally believed to be an importation. In the Royal Forests the most notable examples are to be found in great avenues planted by man. There is a noble one at Clumber.

The lime has for centuries been held in the highest esteem.

"Is there a more ravishing or delightful object," writes Evelyn, "than to behold some street or entire town planted with these trees in lines before their doors so as they seem like cities in a wood?"

Thanks to the esteem in which the lime was held in Evelyn's time, the Londoner of to-day is familiar with the tree in metropolitan parks. Those in St. James's

Park are said to have been planted at the suggestion of Evelyn himself. It is also interesting to note that Grinling Gibbons used the wood of the lime for his carvings.

The beauty of wide-set trees in broad avenues must always be a matter of individual taste. It was customary, a century or two ago, to regard a fine well-grown tree with a head like a cabbage as the acme of pictorial charm. Two rows of these trees, set well apart, and running before the eyes for miles have, in the writer's humble opinion, too much the appearance of giant hedgerows close clipped. With a predilection for narrow avenues, these great green ramparts rolling over the landscape give no sense of either dignity or beauty.

One must not, of course, quote the pictures of the camera as giving anything but faithful records of line and composition; but it is only necessary to look at the finest and most faithful photographs of such avenues as the Long Walk at Windsor, for instance, or the Lime Avenue at Clumber, to see how ineffective and unpicturesque they are. In the mass bushy trees are only impressive, not eloquent.

Yet to some temperaments there is positive delight in beholding a well-grown, bushy tree rising from a stubby central column of huge girth, spreading its lowest branches horizontally, as though trimmed with shears, and completing the outline with a shape suggestive of a soldier's busby. The forester will recount with pride the number of cubic feet of timber;

but what would our forests be if all their inhabitants grew like this? Where the charm of interlacing bough and infinite diversity of crooked branch straining upwards to the skies, or drooping low in indolent abandon?

The driver of a hired vehicle in the Forest promised that presently he would point me out the finest tree in his opinion—he claimed to be an authority on the trees of the Forest. This was interesting to one eager for knowledge, but it was a great disappointment when he indicated an oak that was just a mammoth mop, surrounded by a dozen weather-worn birches infinitely more interesting, more beautiful, more articulate.

The old landscape painters, with a few notable exceptions, gave their trees this balloon-like, bushy character, but it could not have been altogether a convention. Doubtless many trees were lopped and trimmed in accordance with this fashion, being grown for bulk of timber rather than for height. We know that among the oaks the need for crooked timber (elbows) for the Navy caused the trees to be grown wide rather than high; whereas in modern forestry the aim is always now to produce lofty, straight-growing columns devoid of side notches. The Government plantations in the New Forest and the Forest of Dean are examples of this later-day cultivation.

Each man to his taste. It is conceivable that a scaffold-pole merchant would thrill with enthusiasm at the sight of half a mile of firs or larches packed close in a rectangle and surrounded by rails; an artist

demands sinuous lines, space, slanting lights, and atmosphere.

It is amusing to "talk trees" with an expert, or even with men who guard the forests. Enthusiasts all, they nevertheless cannot for long grasp the notion that the forest monsters can be judged only from the point of beauty. It pains them to hear a tree described as "fine" when it is crooked, hollow, half dead, and growing in a most unhappy situation.

SAVERNAKE FOREST

"For what more august, more charming and useful than the culture and preservation of such goodly plantations that shade to our grandchildren give!"

Evelyn

VII. SAVERNAKE, AND SOME OTHER FORESTS

CHAPTER XVII

THE FINEST AVENUE IN ENGLAND—THE FOREST OF ANDERIDA

"IT doth appear," says Manwood, "by sundry ancient histories, as in the *Concordantia Historiarum* and others, that forests have been alwaies in this realm from the first time that the same was inhabited. And also you may read there that Gurgantius, the son of Belinus, being a king in this land, did make certain forests for his delight and pleasure in Wiltshire."

So we owe to King Gurgantius, a not very familiar person even to students, the preservation of the beautiful woodland tract now known as Savernake Forest, which has been the delight of many succeeding monarchs, but in the present day is remarkable as being the only English forest in the possession of a subject. The Marquis of Aylesbury is the present owner, and enjoys, among other privileges, the right to fling his gates across the great Bath road and smash

up unwary motorists if they blunder in the darkness. The busiest motor-highway in the country just cuts through the edge of Savernake Forest, and the gate is necessary to keep the deer from straying.

Savernake and its surrounding wooded hills have been quoted as the finest existing remnant of an English forest to be seen in this country. Yet it is to be doubted whether many people are aware of the fact, or trouble to investigate any but the Great Avenue—that most wonderful sylvan cathedral aisle, four miles in length, tunnelled through the trees. "The finest avenue in England," is the verdict of some upon this wonderful bower of lofty beech running from Savernake to Marlborough. Others claim that it is the finest in the world. It traverses undulating ground that gives a delightful variety to its vistas; but, if we mistake not, this noble approach to Tottenham House is the result of scientific plantation rather than the wild work of Nature. The trees rise high and clean, arching at the top in true Gothic fashion, and run with scarcely a break for miles with conventional regularity. But instead of being marshalled in single file on either side, they stand five or six deep, filling in the openings, and giving the effect of a bore through a close-packed wood of immensely tall trees. The avenue is not dark; indeed it is strangely bright; and the grey trunks of the smooth beeches, catching the light on either side, add to the effect of brightness.

The first impression on entering is one of respectful awe. Here we are in a church of trees that

SAVERNAKE—THE GRAND AVENUE

"The sum of all is Paradise itself was but a kind of Nemorous Temple or sacred grove planted by God himself and given to Man"

Evelyn

reminds us of the transepts of Cologne Cathedral. The triple and quadruple rows on either side, beyond the direct margin of the roadway, give a sense of solidity, of construction, a feeling of enclosure quite different from the Long Avenue at Windsor, for instance, where one only sees the handiwork of man in grim precision and gathers no impression of a roof-top.

We feel at once an Influence in an over-arching grove. A reverent spirit is engendered ; a silence holds us in its grip. We are indeed in church, and begin at once to seek for explanations, to rebel against the awesome solemnity of stately trees. What is this aspect of holiness that is absent from a common wood? Is it a conviction that here is the model from which man derived the idea of Gothic architecture?

We are on dangerous ground. A whole chapter might be written on the relation of forest aisles to Gothic architecture. It is asserted that the one did *not* originate the other; and where Ruskin has dogmatized and Kingsley acquiesced, no mere forest scribe should dare to disseminate exploded theories.

The Expert and the Authority are nothing if not minutely and historically exhaustive. Ruskin seems to split hairs with an axe when he flouts the idea of Gothic aisles originating in forest aisles. He proves his assertion by a historical review of the rise of the column and the vaulted roof through pre-Gothic millenniums, showing their origin from quite different sources. After smashing our beautiful delusion, he goes on

virtually to admit all the essential truth of it, so far as the sentiment of the thing is concerned.

In the *Stones of Venice* he says: "It is precisely because the reverse of this theory is the fact, because the Gothic did not arise out of, but developed itself into, a resemblance to vegetation, that this resemblance is so instructive as an indication of the temper of the builders. It was no chance suggestion of the form of an arch from the bending of a bough, but a gradual and continual discovery of a beauty in natural forms which could be more and more perfectly transferred to those of stone, that influenced at once the heart of the people and the form of the edifice. The Gothic architecture arose in massy and mountainous strength, axe-hewn, and iron bound, block heaved upon block by the monk's enthusiasm and the soldier's force; and cramped and stanchioned into such weight of grisly wall, as might bury the anchoret in darkness, and beat back the utmost storm of battle, suffering but by the same narrow crosslet the passing of the sunbeam, or of the arrow. Gradually, as that monkish enthusiasm became more thoughtful, and as the sound of war became more and more intermittent beyond the gates of the convent or the keep, the stony pillars grew slender and the vaulted roof grew light, till they had wreathed themselves into the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest, and of the dead field-flowers, long trodden down in blood, sweet monumental statues were set to bloom for ever beneath the porch of the temple or the canopy of the tomb."

So that, after all, the solemn majesty of the forest

aisles which we see translated into cold and silent stone in Gothic aisles, was, if not the source, the final inspiration. The resemblance is so recognizable that the veriest lout who has worshipped in a Gothic aisle is struck at once by the church-like aspect of such an avenue as that in Savernake. He may not have noticed the similarity of the church to the avenue; although he sees at once the likeness of the avenue to the church.

In the beginning Man worshipped in groves, thence removed to temples with such architecture as the builders of his day provided. But we find that finally the church builders surrendered to the inspiration of Nature's original example, the over-arching grove—at once the most noble, the most solemn, the most godly of all enclosures known to man. The spirit of reverence is instinctively engendered by the subtle invitation of the arches; and the same Directive Force that shapes the wonderful flower and tree-forms in the ice on the window-panes worked, apparently haphazard, in the temple arches towards the same arboreal articulation in stone.

Whether it be dewdrops freezing into ice, or soda crystallizing in a china bowl, Nature loves to move in tree shapes, leaf shapes, flower forms. The builders of the birds' nests, the weavers of cocoons, the spiders spinning webs, the makers of the coral palaces, all follow lines of harmonious beauty. Only man outrages natural laws by flouting simple instincts and forsaking wood for hard, unyielding stone. But even he at last made stones rise up in avenues that bowed o'erhead in vaulted aisles and borrowed grandeur from the pattern of the

groves; thus surrendering to the universal prompting of the presiding spirit toward this same articulation which, for the want of better term, we have called aboreal.

As the Great Avenue is traversed, it provides some sensational effects. Now it dips into a hollow, and through a break a greater light streams in as from gaunt window gaps. Farther ahead the path rises suddenly to the sky; hills are exaggerated, and promise a steep climb up into the tree-tops. Yet when the steepy slope is reached it is nothing unusual after all. An occasional cyclist will pass, whizz down the hill and reascend. Surely he will fall back in a minute; but no, he goes on, up and up like a fly upon a wall, and passes over somewhere up in the leafy roof.

This undulatory character prevents any monotony. There is scarcely a quarter of a mile that can be compared with or be mistaken for any other stretch of similar length; the whole is full of individuality. As we proceed other avenues come into view. They invite us to left and right; and there is one point where eight walks meet. Here is an opening at last, and the beeches give place to fir.

At the point at which the walks verge to a common centre, a former owner intended to have erected an octagonal tower; but it was abandoned. It would have been no great acquisition, though more pleasant than the original erection which once defiled the spot—a gibbet, in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It was surmounted by a pair of ram's horns in commemoration

SAVERNAKE—THE GRAND AVENUE

of the execution there of a notorious sheep-stealer named Braithwaite, a native of Cumberland.

Everywhere there are delightful peeps; but in the main the trees are not of great antiquity, although the ground may retain very much of its old forest aspect, with thicket and fern and self-sown birch. Yet there are a few monster oaks that have escaped the axe to attain a picture post card notoriety and attract the curious. One old tree, known as the Duke's Vaunt, probably received its name in the reign of Edward VI. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1802 speaks of it as ancient and famous even then.

"From its stupendous bulk it must long have been the admiration and wonder of the neighbourhood. Its dimensions were given as 30 feet in circumference on the outside, and 20 feet round the hollow within. Within this hollow space a young tree was once planted, which grew for some time, but had at last succumbed to the unfavourable circumstances of its position.

"This long-time pride of the Forest stands near the highway leading from Marlborough to Great Bedwyn, about half a mile from the great London Bath road on the northern boundary of the parish of Burbage; and I remember on a perambulation round the boundaries of that parish about forty years ago (1762) being one of twenty boys who were shut up together in the concavity, and also that a band of music, consisting of a violin, hautboy, and bassoon, played several tunes in it.

"There was then a door hanging to it, which was locked occasionally."

The origin of the name Savernake is "wropt in mystery," and the usual amount of imagination has been at work devising a derivation without success. In the days of King Athelstan, A.D. 933, there is reference to "the wood called Safernoc," yet the name is not found in the Domesday Book one hundred and fifty years later.

In the time of Henry II the Esturmys of Wolfhall were by right of inheritance the Bailiffs and Guardians of the Forest of Savernac. In memory whereof their great hunting horn tipped with silver was preserved by the Esturmys from that time, until at length it passed into the hands of the Seymours, and from them came into the possession of the Bruces, by whom it is still retained.

This horn, which is a wonderful piece of workmanship, and may almost be considered a national treasure, remained in the Seymour family until 1678. There is an interesting picture of it in Mr. Adams' book, *Sylvan Savernake*, showing it to be of quite unusual artistic interest. By the terms of the Royal grant of Savernac to the Esturmy family, the great hunting horn was to be blown on the occasion of Royal visits ; a custom, no doubt, more honoured in the breach than the observance : and when George III paid his visit to the first Earl, who raised the famous memorial column in the park, the omission was remarked. The King banteringly assured his host that the estates had practically become forfeit to the Crown. It was explained that it was impossible to find anyone capable of blowing the horn ; and this explanation was "graciously accepted."

SAVERNAKE—THE GRAND AVENUE

In memory of the visit, and of many benefits conferred upon him by the King, Thomas Brudenhall Bruce, first Earl of Aylesbury, erected the lofty column which stands isolated at the end of a wide vista opposite Tottenham House. It can be seen for miles, and is a landmark on the horizon around Marlborough.

How rarely memorials of this kind seem to be erected nowadays. True, the Jubilee of Queen Victoria resulted in a sporadic growth of more or less undignified and insignificant monuments, but our aristocracy and landed plutocrats appear to have lost the taste for stones piled high above the tree-tops to perpetuate a sentiment or a memory. A stained-glass window or a cheque to a hospital are perhaps easier, and excite less criticism. It is surprising, because such memorials as do break the skyline are most devoutly cherished, and their removal would be regarded as an offence by the whole countryside. Since the erection of the Pyramids men of note have delighted to perpetuate memories in stone; and the good old English fashion of a column on a hill-top is more enduring than many a modern charitable bequest. Even churches on eminences, with spires rising to the clouds, are less in favour than formerly. Perhaps, now that man has conquered the elements and travels in the upper air, they will be regarded as public nuisances and interdicted by law.

The Romans apparently cherished this Forest, for the great Waynsdyke passes right through it; and in the vicinity of Tottenham House there originally stood a Roman Villa, the foundations of which have been dis-

covered about a hundred yards off. In laying them bare mosaic designs of hunting pieces were revealed, showing that even then the neighbourhood was frequented for the purposes of sport. Silver coins of Julius Cæsar have also been found at the Forest brick-kilns.

. . . . . .

Another old forest that survives in a depleted form is Ashdown in Sussex. All along a lofty ridge of the Sussex Downs runs a tract of rough country known as Ashdown and St. Leonard Forests. The Forest ridge extends from Horsham in the west to East Grinstead in the east; and the motorists tearing through from Horsham to Tunbridge Wells, or from London to Eastbourne, know it only by its gradients and the absence of hedgerows and fences.

The forest is no more, they will tell you; mansions and cottages are everywhere, and the wooded area straggles over the hills in such a manner that the country presents no unusual features. Yet if they were to pause in the neighbourhood of Forest Row to explore the heather-clad slopes, mounting to the High Trees, they would see before them miles of rolling tree-tops, as their ancestors did when the kings hunted here with hound and horn.

The great Forest of Anderida, in the time of Cæsar, presented a closer formation of trees than now; yet purple slopes and sandy wastes were there as well. The Saxons changed Anderida to Andredes-weald, and later this portion became Ashdown. The origin and

SAVERNAKE—A PEEP FROM THE GRAND AVENUE THROUGH THE TREES ACROSS THE PARK

meaning of the name is unknown; and though it would appear to have relation to the ash tree, and a presumed prevalence of it, as a matter of fact the ash is, and probably always was, a quite uncommon tree in these woods.

Forest Row, in the heart of the present Forest, has become something of a holiday place with scenery lovers, for here we rise some eight hundred feet above sea-level, with a glorious prospect from the High Trees of undulating downs fading into the sky in every direction, with a blustering, bosom-swelling wind tearing over the rolling downs from the distant sea. The wide highway in the valley is swallowed up by the trees, and scarcely a house can be seen right away to East Grinstead Church. The place is singularly reminiscent of Devon; for in another direction it is rolling heath, with boggy green valleys and lonely clumps of green on weather-worn hills.

For a vivid appreciation of the region we must turn to the pen of Richard Jefferies; the camera is helpless when confronted with a panorama, or a land that fades into the sky.

"A thousand acres of purple heath, sloping southward to the sea, deep valleys of dark heather; farther slopes beyond of purple, more valleys of heather, and so on, mile after mile, until the heath-bells seem to end in the sunset. Round and beyond is the immense plain of the air—you feel how limitless the air is at this height, for there is nothing to measure it by. Past the Weald lie the South Downs, but they form no boundary;

the plain of the air goes over them to sea and space. This wild tract of Ashdown Forest bears much resemblance to Exmoor. You may walk or ride for hours and meet no one, and if black game were to start up it would not surprise you in the least."

In the days of the verderers various banks and dykes were used as boundaries, and they still exist in many places, enclosing rectangular spaces, possibly enclosures into which the deer were driven to fatten previous to the autumnal salting down for winter use.

No mention is made of Ashdown Forest in Domesday, neither by its own name nor that of any of its constituent parks; but there are the usual entries about the woods of the manor—all original portions of the Forest land—and the swine that fed therein. From these we find that the lords received from such woods as are mentioned 719 hogs; so that we may number the pig pannage in those woodlands, part of Ashdown Forest, of which Domesday takes note, at more than seven thousand acres. The Forest which is now called Ashdown, lying in the north of the rape, and extending into only six parishes, in the days when it was called Pevensey Forest, covered also much of the south, reaching as near to Pevensey as to justify the name.

Its early history is in the main a record of donations of forest lands and forest rights to various religious houses of the neighbourhood.

The Forest was controlled in time of peace by one master forester, with his servant and eight other serjeants

THE HIGH TREES, ASHDOWN

"As sunbeams stream through liberal space,
And nothing jostle or displace,
So waved the pine tree through my thought"

Emerson

and not less. Moreover, Ralph the Marshal, whether in his person or by deputy, had to be one of eight serjeants with a horse, by reason of the land he held in "Bodinggeham" and "Rottingeham"; in return he could have twelve oxen at Colbebech and Uleleye, and a beech tree yearly for fuel, while his swine were free to pannage.

In 1370 Edward III granted to his third son, John of Gaunt, the free chase of Ashdown, with the rights and liberties pertaining thereto. John of Gaunt being Duke of Lancaster, Ashdown Forest became a portion of the Duchy, and was subsequently denominated in official documents as Lancaster Great Park.

According to Horsfield's *History of Sussex*, 13,000 acres of Ashdown Forest had, from time immemorial, been enclosed by one or other of our monarchs, and surrounded with a fence, "for the better conveniency and security of the deer and other stock, and preservation of the woods." But about the year 1641 or 1642, "at which time the said forest, or park, being well stocked with red and fallow deer, and the lodges and fences thereof being in good repair, and great store of wood and timber therein, it was by the malicious people of those times totally destroyed; the deer killed, the fences thrown down, the woods wasted, and the lodges ruined, and the whole forest laid open and waste." In this state it continued until the restoration of Charles II, who, in the thirteenth year of his reign, granted the same to the Earl of Bristol for the term of ninety-nine years, at the yearly rental of £200 per annum, with full powers to

divide, sub-divide, and enclose the same. But although the King, by letters patent, waived his privilege, and exempted the park from Forest laws; and although he was at a considerable expense in forming ditches and fences around the most valuable part of it, owing to the "crossness of the neighbourhood" the property was constantly damaged and the hedges and ditches destroyed, in so much that, the Earl being unable to pay the stipulated rent, the lease became void. In the twenty-eighth year of the same reign, the King, in consideration of the yearly rental of £100 and 12d. (which was afterwards granted to the Duke of Dorset and his heirs for ever), and other valuable considerations, granted the Forest to Sir Thomas Williams and Joseph Hill.

As disputes were constantly arising between the customary tenants of the Manors of Maresfield and Duddleswell and the proprietors and owners of the Forest, respecting the rights claimed by the former of herbage and estovers in the Forest, a commission, bearing date 4th William and Mary, issued out of their Majesties' Court of Duchy Chamber, at Westminster, for dividing the Forest of Ashdown, or Lancaster Great Park, between the proprietors and owners of the Forest and the tenants claiming forestage there. Six thousand five hundred acres were agreed by the commissioners to be sufficient common of herbage for the tenants, and this quantity of the Forest was allotted in proportion to their respective claims.

In a district closely associated with the iron industry from remote antiquity, it is only natural that the old

ASHDOWN FOREST—FROM THE "HIGH TREES"

trees should have disappeared; yet there are a few at High Beeches, in a noble cluster, full of dignity and solemn majesty, quite unlike all the rest of the neighbourhood. On a dull, swift-darkening afternoon, when rain-clouds are looming, bringing an early twilight, the little wood of veterans is profoundly impressive. A darksome wood indeed, with patches of light, as from high windows, slanting in through the clearings left by fallen and vanished brethren.

Sussex, still, as of old, the most thickly wooded of our Eastern Counties, was at one time an almost trackless fastness. Even in those parts not now covered with any considerable amount of woodland there is evidence of former forests. For instance, in Pevensey and in the marshes around, and at low water in the sea beyond, are signs of forests, subterranean and submerged.

Anderida was one of the refuges of the Britons, and evidences have been found in the shape of coins of undoubted British origin. Other relics have been recovered, notably in 1862 at Mountfield, on the verge of Dallington Forest, a hoard of ancient British gold. Also a boat formed out of a single tree at Maresfield in Ashdown.

It was not only as a refuge in war that the Britons utilized the forests of Sussex. Cæsar speaks of the inhabitants as living chiefly on venison; and Strabo writes of the celebrity of their hunting dogs. We were always a "doggy" race. A little earthenware vase of early British style found near West Tarring exhibits most graphically in relief the wild deer fleeing before

swift gaze-hounds. The Britons were not quite so wild and savage as our schoolbooks would have us believe.

In the days before cabbages and turnips, the woods everywhere had great agricultural value for their mast to feed the swine, which were killed to supplement the winter food supply provided by the flesh of deer and cattle salted down in the autumn. The forests were thus the principal pastures of a wild people. The usual price paid to the early Saxon lords of the manor for the right of pannage was one hog in every seven reared; though in Sussex the old records show that it was one in ten. The woods, therefore, were very much alive. For instance, the total number of hogs which the Domesday records as received by the Sussex lords amounted to 3433, which, if proportional total was one in ten, gives a total of 34,000 pigs.

The dense character of this wide-spreading forest is revealed by an illuminating sidelight in the reign of Edward I, of whom it is recorded that when he journeyed through the district to Chichester, no less than fifteen guides were employed to lead him through the wilds of Sussex.

Nowadays iron roads intersect it, and motors hoot over the rolling downs. All along the Forest ridge, from Horsham eastward, the hill-tops retain their umbrageous crowns; but elsewhere the only guides needed are those in paper covers.

. . . . . .

Of the other forests that naturally occur to the mind the Forest of Arden has associations of interest and

HIGH BEECHES—ASHDOWN FOREST

romance, but it is rather startling to be told by learned authorities that there never was a Forest of Arden in England, and that, indeed, there were no forests at all in Warwickshire. Yet, unless the technical meaning of "forest" is borne in mind, the statement would seem remarkably strange. Tradition has so long associated the forest of Rosalind and Orlando with the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon (although the play was set in the Ardennes, between the Meuse et Moselle), that it offends to be told that the Forest of Dean, or Ardene, may be the locality suggested by Shakespeare.

However, there is a loophole; for it appears in the earliest references to Feckenham Forest in Worcestershire, that part of the Royal pleasaunce extended into Warwickshire. The perambulation of 1300, duly filed in the nation's records, states that there was no forester nor verderer pertaining to the county, and that at the date of the coronation of Henry II *there was no* forest anywhere in Warwickshire.

Undoubtedly the north-west portion of the county was woodland, in the possession of the lords of the manors, and the name forest, as applied to a dense tract of trees, had, by Shakespeare's time, attained the wide and general significance it now bears, quite apart from the question of Royal ownership. Many districts formerly known as forests, Charnwood for instance, were never in Royal hands for the purposes of the chase. The fact of swainmote courts being held in Charnwood and other districts is, however, proof that such areas were Royal hunting-grounds in Saxon days.

There is a beautiful description of the English forest of Arden in Drayton's *Polyolbion* (Song XIII). Elsewhere he refers to it in the "Idea":—

> "Where nightingales in Arden sit and sing
> Amongst the dew-empearlèd flowers."

Among the other districts which we are not now accustomed to regard as forests must be included Exmoor and Dartmoor. It is probable that they have changed very little in appearance since the early days of history. Attempts have been made to prove that at one time they were woodland tracts, and just as much energy has been expended to demonstrate to the contrary. All quite unnecessary; and all due to the misunderstanding of the wide application of the term forest. Yet as the old presentments show, Exmoor contained both red deer and roebuck; and browse for the venison must have been plentiful if scattered. In the dells and on the fringe of water-courses, as now, the thickets flourished; but the higher land, bared to the biting blast from the sea, was always barren, though doubtless not quite so treeless as now. Both districts were probably surrounded by well-wooded land in which the deer found shelter, taking to the open when hard pressed, and affording exciting sport.

Dartmoor was also a forest. The whole district lay within the old parish of Lydford, by far the largest parish in all England, and comprised some 60,000 acres. At an early date it was granted to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, to whom also the castle, manor, and borough of Lydford belonged. Its history has been written in

ASHDOWN FOREST

many books, and the national records of its petty affairs are voluminous, even to the number of cattle, horses, and (later) sheep which pastured on the hilly slopes.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the red deer had become so plentiful that the farmers complained bitterly, and at last they were exterminated by the stag-hounds of the Duke of Bedford, sent down from Woburn for that purpose. It has been said "that Tavistock was so glutted with venison that only the haunches of the animals killed were saved, the rest being given to the hounds."

Every parish of the county has a right to send cattle to the moor, save Barnstaple and Totnes. The Duchy now lets the four quarters of Dartmoor to the moormen, who in return charge a small fee for every sheep, bullock, or horse turned out, not belonging to a Venilleman (person privileged in certain parishes), and this fee includes, as it did of old, a pledge of protection.

Some thirty of the original boundary or ancient guide-stones remain, more than in any other forest owing to the imperishable nature of the local granite. The deer are still hunted, but they are not much in evidence, and the one-time preserve has become a great holiday and health resort for the people of the west and south of England, who find a subtle charm in its breezy heights. Their mild approbation is as nothing, however, to the fierce love of the Devon men for the purple heights of and around Haytor. For them paradise itself will have no charm unless the heights are capped with tors and the hill-sides clothed with heather. The freedom of

the moors is half his life's blood to a true Devon man, and one shudders to think what would happen if a later-day tyrant ever attempted to enclose the glorious waste.

It is probable that more pictures have been painted upon the slopes of Dartmoor than on any other portion of England; and of the many artists of the pen who have made the neighbourhood their own, Eden Phillpotts stands pre-eminent. He has done for Dartmoor what Blackmore did for Exmoor in *Lorna Doone*. Blackmore thought it high praise when he heard from a visitor to the west that "*Lorna Doone* to a Devonshire man is as good as clotted cream almost!" The works of Phillpotts must be as precious as the moors themselves. They breathe the very spirit of the place, and are instinct with the life of the people. A region of romance truly, and many more books will be written upon it yet.

THE 'ELEPHANTUS PIMPLANUS.' (NOTE ALSO THE ANTLERED HEAD ON THE LEFT)

THE LIZARD TREE, THORESBY

GOLLYWOG TREES, BURNHAM BEECHES

A NEW VARIETY OF SHEEP

THE COW

THE JESTER'S HEAD

GOLLYWOG TREES

A NEW BEAST OF BURDEN

A SKELETON

GOLLYWOG TREES

BREED UNKNOWN

THE GRASSHOPPER

A NEW TYPE OF BULL

THE MASTIFF'S HEAD

GOLLYWOG TREES

THE ELK TREE. (THE TAIL WAS ADDED IN DERISION)

THE IDIOT COW

GOLLYWOG TREES

VIII. WOODLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE WOODS WITH A CAMERA

IT is computed that there are a million cameras in use in this country, chiefly owing to the American invasion of the film and snapshot variety. But if the amateur photographer's aim is the making of pictures, rather than mere *tablets de souvenir*, he must not trouble his instantaneous shutter in the woods.

The absence of good photographs of forest scenery, even among professional records, is due possibly to the puzzling contrast of deep shade and bright light, which are the principal charm of the woodland to the eye but disastrous in the camera. As the snapshottist knows, by bitter experience, it is not much good pressing the button anywhere unless the sun is out, and the shadows are few and far between. But I have seen dozens of hopeful photographers—chiefly ladies—blithely snapshotting away in the heart of a sun-dappled glen in the full belief that they will take home pleasing pictures. So a few words of advice.

First to the unexperienced in technical detail, since

they form at least fifty per cent. of the disciples of Daguerre.

An ordinary cheap, snapshot camera usually works at about a twentieth of a second, in which time your plate, or film, will probably record about one-twentieth of the proper picture. A woodland interior, as far as lighting goes, is very much like a domestic one. No one snapshots the drawing-room without dire disappointment, or expects to photograph the inside of a church in a flash. No hard-and-fast rule can be given that will be infallible; but the possessors of the cheap kodak, or similar cameras with a fixed focus—that is, a lens that does not require adjusting for every picture—will never go far wrong if they expose for one second whenever they are working under trees in the woodland, and the sun is not shining brilliantly.

If a handy, portable tripod is not available, press the camera against a tree-trunk, and steady it for the necessary second, or even half-second; the result will be more satisfactory. As a general rule there is very little to be obtained in the woods when the sun is shining brilliantly. The sunlit portions require a twentieth of a second exposure, and the shadows anything up to four seconds; so what are you to do? The best light is when the sun is coming and going behind light clouds. Wait till it is half-screened, then make your exposure. If there is no sun at all, increase the exposure twice or three times. Good pictures are secured on the edges of a wood, in the evening, when the sun is setting. Here, again, the exposure runs up to

ON THE SLOPES OF ASHDOWN

a second, or two seconds with a cheap camera of the snapshot variety.

Those who possess a more expensive apparatus, with a lens of recognized standing, will do better work if they *stop down* to F 11; that is to say, reduce the aperture of the lens with the iris diaphragm, then double the exposure, and double again for every point in the stopping down, thus F 11 one second, F 16 two, F 22 four, and so on.

It is astonishing how many people are quite ignorant of the use of the diaphragm. It improves the focus of things near and far, and enables time exposures to be given in comfort where fractions of a second would be irritating, and also out of the range of the shutter.

To workers of experience, I would quote the excellent rule: take care of your foreground and the rest will take care of itself. In the woods there is much tangle, which makes a charming foreground, and if the rest goes dark it does not matter much.

To the old hand, the all-wise person with a particular fancy for one brand of special rapid plates, one particular make of lens, and one unapproachable form of camera, it is difficult to give any advice. As a rule, sir, you are obstinate, and prefer the field camera with its dozen complicated movements, a shabby old tripod, and a big cloth to creep under and make yourself look ridiculous. You are quite accustomed to focusing the image on the ground-glass screen upside down; and you prefer it. It makes no difference that the world is thus inverted. Well, if you wish to secure artistic

compositions, the only help I can give is to advise you to learn to stand on your head. Professional photographers, and others, stoutly declare that they are so familiar with the inverted view that they forget it is upside down. One cannot argue with them; but it must be obvious to those who do not use a camera that no man living can judge the artistic value of a scene upside down.

There is a form of camera, quite common nowadays, known as a "reflex." It is expensive, but there are good ones to be secured at reasonable prices. In these there is a mirror which throws the image the right way up on to a ground-glass screen at the top of the camera instead of at the back, and the operator looks down an elongated hood. Quite apart from the practical advantages of this method of selecting your pictures, it is a perpetual delight to see the landscape reproduced in all its brilliant colouring, with light and life and movement. The colour is fascinating; beautiful pictures seem to be everywhere; but one soon learns that they have no "composition." Beware of the seduction of colour. It is the mass of shadow and its distribution in contrast to the lighted trunks of the trees which make the effective forest picture. It is only after a trial of a camera of this description that the operator discovers how little use the unaided eye is in selecting subjects for photography. The most delightful compositions, that would please and satisfy an artist, are chosen, but when the scenes are viewed upon the ground-glass screen they are found to be quite unsuitable.

THE WOODMAN'S WIFE

The reflex camera, then, becomes a finder; its glass eye and mirror are directed by you in a hundred different directions during a walk, and unexpected compositions reveal themselves, requiring only a natural taste for artistic balance and knowledge of exposure to enable charming pictures to be secured. The usual "bright finder" is a snare and a humbug.

If, however, your field camera, with its almost unnecessary swing-back, cannot be abandoned, any handy man can make for himself a mirror to hinge behind the ground-glass screen at an angle of 45 degrees; a simple arrangement of cardboard and black linen, or leather, will make a hood, and the camera can then be carried about, apart from its legs, and used as a full-sized "finder" without a focusing cloth. The hood, if hinged, will fold and turn out of the way with the screen.

A distinct improvement will be found in the edges of the pictures chosen when so selected; for when they are viewed the right way up, one sees at once how liable one is to destroy the true balance and value, by cutting off the scene in the middle of a tree, for instance, or including too much.

Every picture in this volume was taken with a reflex camera and a Goertz or Ross lens—not that the lenses had much to do with them, because the necessity for time exposures, and for getting near and far objects in focus, made it imperative to stop down for comfort and leisure. The same results could have been secured in the majority of cases with the cheapest of lenses. Nearly all the Burnham Beeches pictures were quarter

plate, and some of them have been enlarged for carbon to sizes as great as 27 × 17 without any loss of vigour, thanks to the infinite variety of detail which the leaves and boughs provide upon a still day.

The wind is the worst foe of all; and of course the better the lens the quicker the exposure in these cases. Another advantage of a lens working at F 6, or better at F 4, with a reflex, is the comfort of focusing in dark interiors or in the evening. Some very pleasing effects are got from time to time by the use of a "graded" ortho screen that will restrain and capture the clouds in the sky. Use a colour screen whenever you can—a lemon-yellow one, not the cheap brown-orange things. Failing an expensive one, the kodak gelatine shilling screens are as true as any. Barnet extra rapid ortho and medium ortho plates were the ones principally used; and generally *backed.* None but backed plates should be trusted.

And now as to selection and composition. Avoid striving for too much in a picture. Search for a broken-foreground line, and endeavour to introduce the vista and avenue effect whenever possible. The first few days of spring, when the leaves are bursting, and the first fortnight when they are all brilliant and every tree has a different colour, are the best times to visit the woods. The light is then at its best, with big white clouds rolling, giving you your choice of the sun, or "sun shining through light clouds." There is also a period of a fortnight in the autumn, especially among beech trees, when the leaves are yellow and thinning. It is then

that the ortho chromatic plate will give you the most satisfactory renderings, providing light, bright pictures, without over exposure or causing the plates to "choke up." If there is a light haze hanging in the woods after rain, so much the better; it fills in hollows which would otherwise be overloaded with detail, and gives a broad, free effect. The picture reproduced in photogravure and used as our frontispiece was taken under such conditions.

The recurrence of the human figure in the illustrations to this book was considered necessary to give some idea of the height of the trees, as well as to make contrast and supply interest. Experience has shown that any kind of model will not do. The modern feminine hat and fleeting fashion of dress are abominations in a woodland landscape; there must be some sort of harmony between the figure and the environment; as a general rule, take care that the natural outline of the head and neck are retained, as is usually the case with the head-dress of the peasant and country-folk. If you secure male models, let them be well battered, ill dressed, and as rustic as possible. A bowler hat in a leafy dell, or a silk topper in a winding lane, are as incongruous as a man walking into church in cricketing flannels. Any old rag will do for drapery of the female figure; but the best is a length of Indian silk or heavy chiffon. A sunbonnet, though apt to become monotonous from too much repetition, is excellent for showing the lines of the head—but it must not be white or it will gleam like a snowball. It should be pink or grey, and if old and crushed so much the better.

The artist always has an advantage over the photographer in his ability to drop harmonious figures into his landscape exactly in the vacant spot to ensure completeness of balance; and it will be noticed that he usually makes them small; therefore if you have an adaptable model, be sure that his, or her, place in the picture is not too near the camera. Where the landscape is only a setting for a posed figure, it is, of course, different.

Don't pose your models like studio dummies; but watching them in your reflex mirror, wait until a suitable pose is naturally taken, and then secure sudden immobility by a sharp signal or command. The rest is only a matter of seconds, for in your reflex everything is ready for exposure.

Just a few final "dont's."

Don't be stingy; sacrifice a dozen plates to get a good picture, it will only cost you a shilling or so.

Don't be afraid to throw away bad negatives. It saves printing paper, and is cheaper in the long run.

Don't muddle with a variety of chemicals. For a beginner Rodinal will do all he needs in every branch.

Don't rely on exposure meters in the woods, but use a calculator; remembering that the *nature of your subject* is the most vital thing to determine the exposure.

Don't be satisfied with negatives as the camera produces them. In nearly half of them some parts are certain to be over-exposed. A little reduction with cottonwool and ferrocyanide will equalize matters.

BURNHAM BEECHES

"'Tis sweet to hear a brook, 'tis sweet
To hear the Sabbath-bell,
'Tis sweet to hear them both at once,
Deep in a woody dell"

Don't be afraid to use a five times, or even a ten times, screen.

Don't use a screen at all unless the light is good and the contrasts are strongly marked, otherwise there may be a flat, thin picture.

Don't spend hours "faking" a poor negative; go out and take a better one, it consumes less time.

. . . . . .

There are examples given in these pages of some "freak" photographs, or rather photographs of freaks of nature which the camera intensifies, called for want of a better name Gollywog Trees. They are included in this section in the absence of any happier method of classification, and may be regarded as photographic curiosities.

Mr. Arthur Rackham, the artist, has shown the demoniacal aspects of trees by a playful exaggeration of their peculiarities, and a careful study of their root-forms above ground. Their distortions when growing in rocks and uncongenial soil, their resemblance to eccentric humanity in old age, the similarity of their claw-like roots to the limbs of the octopus, the serpentine suggestion of their twisted trunks, the gaping eyeholes of the old boles, the vasty jaws, the interlocking branches, all provide him with suggestions for his goblin pictures. The humour that he extracts from them is largely of his own creation; a hand here, and an eye there, and the trees are all alive.

This exaggeration, however, is not quite as wilful as he would have us believe. There are grotesque aspects of trees in nature, and cases where the extraordinary

similarity between tree life and animal life is so marked as to need very little emphasis or accentuation.

Here the camera is of distinct service as a witness. The surprising examples of malformed trees—chiefly beeches—given in the accompanying illustrations are due to the work of the axe followed by the attempts of Nature to recover from her wounds. To begin with, the skin of a beech tree bears a great resemblance to the skin of a mammoth; it is very like an elephant's hide, and the suggestion of the elephant's head and trunk is the most common of all the hundreds of distorted specimens found in Burnham Beeches.

The likeness is obvious in the picture entitled "Elephantus Pimplanus," but what is more wonderful is the accompanying suggestion of ears, trunk, and tusk. In the same tree, to the extreme left, is another animal form, a deer's head with antlers, the existence of which was only discovered when the photograph was printed. There are sometimes a dozen weird heads on one tree, obvious to the imaginative eye, but impossible to capture with the camera.

Sometimes in the light of the morning the gollywog is not there, in the evening the shadows slant and the animal's eye and horn, neck and jaw, start out. The illustration "Long-necked Cow" is a case in point. A second attempt to photograph it resulted in failure. You might pass the tree a dozen times searching for the bovine head and not see it, if the shadows were shy and did not help the illusion.

Not only do portions of the trees take on animal

A GIANT CLAW, WINDSOR

shapes, but whole trees twist themselves into the forms of ridiculous gollywog mammoths. Could anything be more ludicrous than the hollow shell of bark with the crooked horns, "The Sitting Cow"; or, again, the extraordinary malformation, "Feeding the Brute"? Here a tail was added in derision when the photograph was being taken.

A few are very near to the original animal, and there is something uncanny in a tree being so closely allied to the brute kingdom that it can assume identical shape.

It will be seen how little Mr. Rackham need exaggerate when one actually finds the face of a pug-nosed man in the bark of a tree: "The Jester." Some have a certain dignity, as "The Bull's Head," and "The New Variety of Sheep," both of which were found on forest giants of vast age.

Lesser instances are very common, but perhaps require more imagination to discover a parallel among the quadrupeds. Take, for example, "The Dog's Head," a huge bulbous excrescence at the base of an otherwise healthy tree. "The Grasshopper Tree" was an accident due to the beheading of the trunk and the play of the light. "The Lizard" was taken on a distorted oak in Sherwood Forest, close to Thoresby Gates.

These monstrosities are to be found wherever the axe has been at work in days gone by, and in all the Royal Forests. They are best photographed with a telephoto lens, bearing in mind the fact that a dark tree-trunk at

close quarters requires a quite long exposure, especially if the subject is in the depth of a wood. Snapshots are almost useless, but the camera can sometimes be pressed close against the trunk of a neighbouring tree, and held there for an exposure of three or four seconds.

. . . . . .

Since writing the above, a very short experience of photography in colours has opened up an endless range of possibilities. The Lumière Autochrome plate, developed with Quinomet for two and a half minutes exactly, is almost the last word in photography. Any camera; exposure in seconds instead of fractions; the results astounding; and all finished "while you wait." Exposure, development, fixing, and rinsing occupy only fifteen minutes. At once the quickest and easiest process of photography yet devised, with only two and a half minutes in the dark.

Why every amateur is not crazy about this process it is hard to understand. Most were frightened at first by talk of frilling plates and innumerable baths. Then again, ninepence for a quarter-plate is alarming, till you realize that the price includes everything to the finish, and no papers are required. The result is a coloured transparency of the most astounding brilliance. The exposure *must* be correct—but that is easy if you use a calculator or a meter. If the Burroughs & Welcome diary is used, snip out a figure on the subject disc (rarely used), and underneath you can reveal the exposure for Autochromes. In the woods take only evenly lighted subjects.

A PANTOMIME TREE, WINDSOR

(NOTE THE GOBLIN TREE ON THE RIGHT)

INDEX

Agister, 5
Allards, Manor of, 20, 47
Ambesbury Banks, 193
Anderida, Forest of, 125, 289
Arden, Forest of, 290
Ashdown Forest, 284
Assart, 5
Assize of Woodstock, 4
Aylesbury, Marquis of, 275

Bacon, 243
Beasts of the Forest, 6
Beaulieu Abbey, 139
Beauty of Bath, 20
Beech coccus, 31
Beech tree uses (Evelyn), 150
Billagh, 93
Birkland, 93
Blacket, Roger, of Rickmansworth, 58
Boldrewood, 147
Buckstone, 216
Bulstrode, Geoffrey de, 57
Burnham Abbey, 20, 22, 56, 59
Burnham Beeches, 17–85

Cablish, 7
Cæsar, Julius, 20
Canterton Glen, 164
Cants Hall, 23
Charcoal burning, 49
Charles I, 9
Chase, 7
Cheminage, 8–10
Chingford Hunting Lodge, 209
Chute Forest, Wilts, 259
Cistercians, 146
Clumber, 88
Common Hunt, 197
Cönqueror Oak, 248
Constable, 77
Corot, 75
Corporation of London, 69
Cox, Dr. (*Royal Forests of England*, 1905), 5, 6
Cranbourne, 263, 267
Cresswell Crags, 86, 8
Cromwell, 47

Dartmoor, 292
Dean, Forest of, 215
Deer Removal Act, 131
Devil's Chapel, 239
Disraeli, 23
Druid's Oak, 19
Dukeries, 87
Duke's Vaunt Oak, 281

Edward the Confessor, 2
Edwinstowe, 89, 97
Elm trees, 270
Epping, 172
Epping Hunt (Easter), 196
Epping (litigation), 181
Essex, Forest of, 172
Estover, 10
Esturmy Hunting Horn, 282
Evelyn, John, 56, 113, 115, 150, 271
Exmoor, 292
Eyre, 8
Eyries, 10

Fagus, 19, 20
Fairlop Oak, 213

Fence-month, 10
Fisher, Mr., 3
Forbes, Mr., 63
Foresters, 9
Forest forges (Dean), 220
Forest laws, 177
Forest Row, 285
Fowls of the Forest, 9
Free miners (Dean), 231

George IV Statue, 265
Gilpin, 213
Gloucester, 245
Gothic architecture and trees, 277
Gray, 23
Gray's "Elegy," 25, 27
Greendale Oak, 91
Grenville, Lord, 59
Greyhound, 179
Grote, George, 35

Hainault, Forest of, 213
Hardicanute's Moat, 22, 52
Harold (tomb of), 210
Hawks, 10
Heath, Francis George, 69
Hedsor, Margery of, 57
Herne's Oak, 268
High Beech (Epping), 193
High Beeches (Ashdown), 289
High Trees, 284
Hogs (Domesday—Sussex), 290
Hogwarden, 64
Hounds, 10
Hunter (on Robin Hood), 110
Hunter, Sir John, 225

Ivanhoe, 105

Jefferies, Richard (Ashdown), 285

Keats, 123
Kemble, Fanny, 37
King Hal, 261, 265
King of the Romans, 56, 145
Knightwood Oak, 147

Lawing, 178
Lefevre, Right Hon. G. Shaw, 183
Lime trees (Evelyn), 271
Lind, Jenny, 26
Linley, Miss, 34
Loppers' Hall, 188
Lopping (Epping), 180
Loughton, Manor of, 183
Lowell (on Gray), 28
Luttrell, Henry, 83–85
Lymer hounds, 7

Magna Charta, 4
Major Oak, 91, 100
Manvers, Earl, 88
Manwood (*Laws of the Forest*, etc.), 1, 5, 6, 178, 275
Mendelssohn (Felix M. Bartholdy), 35, 42, 43, 45–46
Menzies, William, 256
Mill, John Stuart, 41
Monmouth, Duchess of, 48

Navy, 219
New Forest, 124–171
New Forest (acreage), 137
Newland Church, 236
Newland Oak, 236
Nonsuch, Palace of, 261
Norden, 172

Oaks (Evelyn), 116

Pannage, 11
Parks, 11
Peake, Sir H. W., 69
Perambulations, 11
Phillpotts, Eden (Dartmoor), 294
Punch, 204
Purlieu, 11
Purpresture, 8, 12

Queen Adelaide's Tree (Windsor), 246
Queen Anne's Oak, 249

Queen Elizabeth (Epping), 209
Queen Elizabeth (Windsor), 262
Queen Mary (Windsor), 262
Queen Victoria's Oak, 249

Red Sea (Burnham), 71
Regard, 12
Robin Hood's Caves, 86
Roman remains (Dean), 217, 235, 240
Roman remains (Silchester), 21
Ross, 245
Rufus, 124
Rufus, execution of, 155
Rufus Memorial, 164
Ruskin (on Gothic), 277

St. Briavels Castle, 221, 222
Savernake, 275
"Scowles," 239
Select Pleas of the Forest, 5
Sheridan, 20, 33
Sherwood Forest, 86–123
Simon Foster Oak, 98
Smith, Sydney, 38
Spanish Armada (letter), 267
Speech House, 238
Stag Shooting, 203
Stoke Poges, 25
Swainmote, 12
Sylva, 120
Symond's Yat, 215, 230, 241

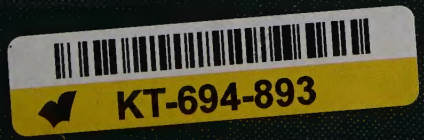
Thoresby, 88
Tintern, 243
Tirel, Sir Walter, 160
Tom Hood, 198–199
Turpin, Dick, 210

Upton, 28

Verderers, 13
Vert, 13
Virginia Water, 256

Walpole, Horace, 23, 24
Waltham Forest, 174, 176
Warren, 14
Wax and Honey, 14
Welbeck, 103
Welsh Fusiliers' goat, 264
White, Gilbert, 132
William the Conqueror, 2, 4
Willingale, 180
Winchester Cathedral, 20
Woodland Photography, 295
Woodwards, 14

Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED
Edinburgh


KT-694-893